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Marxism Today

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Marxism Today

Vol. 10 No. 1

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Editorial Comments

UNITY of the left was the keynote of John Gollan's report to the 29th Congress of the British Communist Party. It was the keynote of the main discussions and of John Gollan's Reply. Before the delegates dispersed they adopted a moving public appeal for a united Left.

People of every sort in recent months have in one way or another voiced their alarm at the way things are going—on prices and wages, rents and rates, pensions and housing, "incomes policy", on the Smith dictatorship in Rhodesia, the outrageous American war in Vietnam, the plans for the nuclear rearmament of West Germany, on the concessions to racialism made by the Government.

But in the words of the Appeal,

> "If such campaigns have not yet fully achieved their objects it is because they remain separate actions, and the great total strength of those engaged in them is not united in a movement to change the whole policy of the government."

Congress therefore, above all else, appealed to every section of the Labour movement, to all those who had been active in the many different campaigns and struggles outlined above, "*to create a united left, which will, by democratic pressure on the government, begin to solve the problems that are causing such concern.*"

Not in any spirit of take-it-or-leave-it, but as a basis for discussion, Congress put forward a nine-point programme for a united left. For agreement on such a programme as this, and united action around it, could, in the words of the Appeal:

> "transform the political position in Britain. It could prevent a Tory comeback and guarantee a peaceful and prosperous future for our people."

In the same spirit, to contribute to this discussion, to raise and discuss both agreements and differences, to seek for an open dialogue, a frank exchange of views within the Left, as a step towards its unity,we print in this issue of *Marxism Today* the "Open Letter to a Non-Communist Left-winger" by Arnold Kettle. We hope our readers from all sections of the Left will send us their comments.

The U.S. Aggression in Vietnam

The fight against the American aggression in Vietnam is now at a very critical stage.

It is critical because the American Government, busy accusing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam of "increased infiltration" in the South, is rapidly increasing its *own* military build-up and its *own* bombing. There are in South Vietnam, as we go to press, some 170,000 U.S. troops. There are plans for 300,000 or more. Nuclear-powered warships have been despatched. Bombing is getting more widespread and more indiscriminate.

Incidentally, one of the points covered by the 1954 Geneva Agreements was that there should be, extending five kilometres north and south of the temporary demarcation line at the 17th Parallel, a demilitarised zone "to act as a buffer zone." The D.R.V.N. has for the fourth time recently had to protest to the International Control Commission that American bombers have violated this zone and dropped bombs on its Northern sector.

The Vietnam situation is at a critical stage because at the end of last year President Johnson was caught by the world in a lie. He was caught lying when he claimed that the United States stood for unconditional "negotiations". Indeed one of the U.S. conditions was that American troops should remain in South Vietnam and the British Foreign Secretary has supported this.

The movement against the American aggression in Vietnam is growing throughout the world, growing fast, and particularly fast inside the United States. The solidarity is deeply appreciated by the Vietnamese people. At the end of last October the Hanoi *Vietnam Courier* produced a special issue under the headlines "Honour and Friendship to the American People Fighting against the Johnson Administration War Policy." On another page, listing the acts of solidarity throughout the world, news from Britain topped the list.

It is heartening to see that the feelings and actions of the British people are appreciated in Vietnam, but let us work to see that this solidarity spreads still wider and that still greater pressure is brought on the Labour Government to end its support for the American aggression in Vietnam.

Britain's Economy

In the last few weeks the British capitalist economy appears to be confounding the prophets. Unemployment is not rising as fast as predicted and the rise in retail prices has slowed down to a marked extent.

Thus between the Labour Government taking office in October 1964 and April 1965 retail prices rose by 4.1 points. Between April 1965 and October 1965 retail prices increased by only 1.1 points. Mr.

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Callaghan is jubilant. Prices he says, correctly, are today rising slightly more slowly than in the similar period of 1964. Is Mr. George Brown's Prices and Incomes Board beginning to make an impact on prices? Alas no. As with the Tories after 1951 the Labour Government is being assisted by a sharp fall in the price of food and other non-food materials imported from primary producing countries, in the main the colonies and ex-colonies of the imperialist powers. In the third quarter of 1964 the prices of foods imported from primary producing countries were 29 per cent above the level of 1961. They have since fallen to a level of only 8 per cent above that of 1961. Not Mr. Brown but the robbery of the colonial people is responsible for the British price level behaving as it is doing at this moment. Indeed the level might be lower still if the British-based monopolists were not constantly using every opportunity to push up prices.

Pantomime Planning

Because earnings were rising faster than prices in the last few months, working class purchasing power is increasing to a microscopical extent. So Mr. James Callaghan declares that the workers are buying too much and increased taxation may be imposed to cut down their income. Ten to one this will be in the form of indirect taxation to increase prices.

Really, Labour "planning" is getting more and more like a Norman Wisdom knock-about act. Mr. Brown runs around pretending to keep prices down, while Mr. Callaghan by increasing prices seeks to take back from the workers the increased earnings they have recently won. One of the merits of planning, it used to be argued, was that it made Government actions more coherent over the whole field. You would never guess it by watching the antics of George and Jim.

One of the difficulties of increasing indirect taxation for this purpose is pointed out by the *National Institute Economic Review* which says:

> "It would be very difficult to explain in popular terms why the Government was putting up prices through taxation, as a consequence of its success in persuading public and private enterprises to keep their prices down."

Not very difficult but impossible to explain in any terms.

Beyond Compare

The civil service has always got the rough end of any Government wages policy. It suffered under Sir Stafford Cripps and languished under Selwyn Lloyd. It was therefore a bit surprising when certain union leaders in the civil service gave support to the Neddy incomes policy and to its successor which is being elaborated by the Tory, Aubrey Jones, with Mr. George Brown acting as the barker advertising the show. For the civil service swears by the concept of comparability. Pay research units are constantly investigating how far civil service salaries are keeping pace with those outside. But to Mr. Aubrey Jones "comparability" is a very dirty word indeed. You might have wage increases if they do not exceed the permissible norm of 3-3½ per cent, or you may have productivity increases if you give up "restrictive practices" so that in future one man does two men's jobs, but you cannot have wage increases on the grounds that some other workers with whom you have always compared your wages and salaries have just got a rise and you have not. "Comparability," says Mr. Jones, is out.

So the wages of people like railwaymen and civil servants of all grades are no longer to be compared with those of anyone else. They are to stand on their own. They can in the future claim increased wages if their job is in the national interest and it is necessary to attract people to it. Maybe this will work just as well. Maybe not.

It is clear however that the Prices and Incomes Board is out to sweep away all the known principles of collective bargaining and replace them with new principles, which are still in process of being discovered.

This being the case it is absurd for the capitalist press to tell us that the incomes policy has failed. It is only since the September T.U.C. that it has begun to be seriously applied, and every union in a wage dispute will in future find exerted against it the full weight of the Prices and Incomes Board and of the Government.

That Deficit again

The Tories have been busy for a whole year trying to explain away the famous £800 million deficit in the balance of payments that they left the Labour Government to tackle. The charge against them is a simple one. Either they saw the deficit building up to the £800 million mark or they did not. If they saw the build-up and decided to do nothing about it, for electoral reasons, then they were guilty of sabotage. If they did not see the deficit building up, then their incompetence was almost without precedent.

So Mr. Kenneth Fleet, financial expert on the *Sunday Telegraph*, tells us that "the bitter legacy" theme was played so skilfully that even Conservative ex-ministers went about ashamed of what they had done.

Mr. Fleet however feels that there is no justification for this shame. The size of the deficit can be explained away. Whether British capitalism's

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creditors will accept the explanation is of course another question.

Firstly, Mr. Fleet explains that imports were significantly higher before the election "because industrialists felt certain that Labour would win, and bought more than their normal requirements in anticipation of import controls." But why did the industrialists think that Labour would be faced with a crisis involving the need for import controls? Was it not because the statistics were showing the abnormal upsurge of imports for several months and so the Tory industrialists took steps to make matters worse, thus sharing the guilt with their Government?

> "The same foreboding was in part responsible for the swing in overseas investment in British securities which on balance were sold last year."

So the Tory industrialists not only scared themselves at the prospects of a Labour Government (how absurd these fears appear today) but scared their foreign counterparts as well.

> "The capital account in 1964 had also to sustain the exceptional purchase by Royal Dutch Shell for £60 million of a half interest in the Montecantini petrochemicals business."

But Royal Dutch Shell was not *compelled* to make this purchase. It made it in the interests of its profits. Was there no one in the Tory Government who understood that this would make a bad situation worse?

Mr. Fleet has not proved that the Tory Government of 1964 was not guilty, he has only proved that masses of business Tories, in the search for the quick buck, were equally as guilty as their Government.

Rome Conference on Tendencies in European Capitalism

At the end of June an international 'research conference' was organised by the Gramsci Institute in Rome (in the Palazzo del Plastico). Its purpose was to contribute to an analysis of the lines of development of European capitalism since the war, with special reference to the policies of European monopolies, to new forms of State Capitalism, to relations with the 'third world' of developing countries, to the position of the working class and the political perspectives of the European Left. It was remarkable for drawing together not only representatives of a large number of countries, both of eastern and western Europe, but also a broad range of trends in the left-wing of the labour and socialist movement in Western Europe. Although the conference took the form of plenary sessions with a long series of speeches (and did not break up into groups or working parties), it saw some genuine debate on a number of points (with disagreements always friendly and not disruptive). One could say that a recurring theme of the conference was the striving for unity among the Left, alike in aims, in immediate policies and in ideas.

There were present representatives from the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, as well as from the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, Britain, France and Austria. Present at the opening session were the Secretaries of both the Italian C.P. and the Italian Socialist Party (L. Longo and R. Lombardi), and a prominent part in the discussion was played by Lelio Basso, of the left-wing Socialist Party, by Professor Bettelheim from the Sorbonne in Paris, by the editors of *Economie et Politique* and *Force Ouvrière* of Paris, by Dr. Pierre Joye of Belgium, by Gerhardsen, the new chairman of the Swedish C.P., and by a number of Yugoslavs (mostly speaking in English). There was a simultaneous translation system into the five official languages of the conference, Italian, French, German, Russian and English.

The conference opened with Professor Pesenti (a Communist Senator) in the chair; and the two opening reports were by Maurice Dobb of Cambridge and by the Institute of World Economics and International Relations in Moscow. The latter was to have been presented by the Institute's Director, Professor Arzumanian (who was ill and has unfortunately since died); and was introduced instead by the deputy-Director, Timofeyev. In subsequent sessions there were reports on Technical Progress and Modifications in the Structure of the Working Class in Western Europe by A. Barjonet, on Experience and Problems of Economic Planning in Western Europe by V. Vitello, on European Planning and the Socialist Movement by Jean Bénard, on Foreign Trade and Investment by Michael Barratt Brown, and on Research and Development by T. Prager. There was a friendly passage of arms between Lelio Basso (who spoke, *inter alia*, about Marxism and the struggle for specific reforms) and Giorgio Amendola (who represents the trend in the C.P.I. in favour of a new and united party of the Left); also between Bettelheim and some of the Yugoslav speakers about the political and economic role of the new States of Afro-Asia. Its main achievement was that on a number of such questions it started what it is fashionable to call a 'dialogue' rather than a debate.

The full report of this important conference is due to be published shortly, and five of the contributions (including Maurice Dobb's) are printed in the November issue of *World Marxist Review*.

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Symposium on Democracy

We have written several times in these columns of the activities of the American Institute for Marxist Studies (AIMS). Its purpose is to bring Marxist thought in the U.S.A. "into the forum of reasonable debate, to produce a meaningful dialogue among Marxist and non-Marxist scholars and writers". Among the methods used to achieve these aims are the organisation of public symposia in which Marxist and non-Marxist scholars participate.

One such symposium—on *Marxism and Democracy*—was held in New York in April 1964 and was attended by 400 people. The various papers read at this meeting have now been published under this title[1], edited by the Director of AIMS—Dr. Herbert Aptheker, whose writings are well known to our readers.

The book contains six essays and a most useful bibliography relating to the subject. Dr. Robert Cohen deals with Marxism and Democracy in general and poses some pertinent questions regarding Marxism and Democracy under Socialism. Dr. Aptheker writes on Marxism as science and its relation to Democracy. The other four essays deal with the relevance of Marxism and Democracy to special problems. Prof. Howard L. Parsons writes on "Socialism's meaning for American Democracy today"; Prof. Gaylord LeRoy on "Romanticism and Modernism—the Marxist view"; Prof. J. P. Moray on "Marxism and Democracy in Cuba"; while the French professor, Jean Suret-Canale, writes on "Marxism and Democracy in Tropical Africa".

There are some considerable differences amongst the different writers in their interpretation of Marxism, but all start from an acceptance of it as an immensely important body of ideas and principles which have to be taken into account in any serious analysis of society or in any particular field of intellectual study.

It is easy to find points of criticism in some of the Essays. For instance, the longest—*Socialism's Meaning for American Democracy Today*—though powerfully written, seems to lack any *class* approach to Socialism in the United States and, indeed, to leave out of consideration the existing Labour and working class movement.

But the aim which the AIMS has set itself is precisely to organise discussion amongst people who, with considerable differences of approach, accept the importance of Marxism for modern society.

That this should be taking place in the United States, and indeed extending, is of no small importance.

[1] Humanities Press, New York.

Marxism and Ethics

The relationship of Socialism to ethics is one which is receiving increasing attention from Marxist thinkers in many countries. One of the most recent studies on this subject is by the American Marxist, Howard Selsam, published under the title of *Ethics and Progress*.[2]

Many of our readers will know his earlier books —*What is Philosophy?*, *Socialism and Ethics* and *A Reader in Marxist Philosophy* (in collaboration with Harry Martel).

Howard Selsam brings down to earth discussion of a question often regarded as abstruse and as concerned largely with standards governing personal behaviour. He argues that while mankind is moving *towards* an understanding of what should be an "all-human ethic", there is no such thing as ethics in the abstract. Moral standards, ethical judgements, derive in the last analysis from the way people live and the kind of society they live in. Consequently different social groups and classes see moral and ethical problems in different and opposed ways.

He emphasises again and again that ethics must be regarded as infinitely more than a rationalisation of standards of right and wrong for the individual in his personal life. To be meaningful, he contends, ethics must clarify one's attitude to other people, be linked with the aim of bringing about a better life for all, and today this must involve commitment in the fight against the Bomb, against Racialism, the U.S. Aggression in Vietnam, poverty and injustice in our own country, etc.

From this it follows, he argues, that the relationship between Socialism and Ethics is very close. For only the establishment of Socialism can lay the basis of a society which, because it ends the exploitation of man by man, and puts not profit but the benefit of man as the aim of production, can begin to be ordered on the principle of an "all human ethics".

This does not mean, Selsam explains, that ethical principles are not involved in the fight for Socialism or that no ethical problems have been encountered in the actual building of Socialism to date. Far from it. Indeed, one of the merits of this short book is precisely the treatment of these questions. The author faces the crimes and violations of the Stalin era in the Soviet Union and discusses the conclusions that should be drawn from the standpoint of Marxist ethics.

The book concludes with two thought-provoking chapters — "Ends and Means — which justifies which?" and "The Meaning of Progress".

[2] International Publishers, New York, available from Central Books, 7s. 6d.

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The Future of the Left

An Open Letter to a non-communist Left-winger

DEAR COMRADE,

There is concern about the future among all sections of the Left in this country. It is something rather different from the concern felt about particular aspects of the Labour Government's policy, about the handling of the Rhodesian situation for instance or George Brown's incomes policy. For it involves thought about the whole future of Britain: is there any possibility of any really fundamental social change? is there any future for the Left at all?

It is, of course, the performance of the present, and fourth, Labour Government that has brought such questions into people's minds. The excuse of the small parliamentary majority cannot postpone indefinitely a facing of the long-term issues. Each of the Labour Governments has had its excuse. The first two were minority governments. The third, with its huge majority, was faced with the difficult post-war situation. And it is clear that every Labour Government will in fact be faced with some sort of particular inherent difficulty. Does this mean the more radical solutions are to be ruled out for ever? Or do we have to reconcile ourselves to the perpetuation of a situation in which capitalism is accepted as the basis of society and politics becomes a process of alternating Tory and Right-Wing Labour Governments, agreed on fundamentals and sparring only on incidentals and personalities?

The Left I take to comprise those concerned to see a fundamental social change involving the ending of capitalism as an economic and social system. And I take the Left to include, beside the Communist Party, (i) the Left wing of the Labour Party—not simply Left M.P.s but the progressive wing of the local constituency and ward parties; (ii) the militant wing of the trade union movement, stronger in some unions than others, and expressing itself especially among the shop stewards; (iii) a large proportion of the active membership of the peace movement, youth movements and such organisations as tenants' and pensioners' associations; (iv) left-wing intellectuals, students and progressive middle-class people in the professions; and (v) a number of small Left organisations on the fringes of the working-class movement.

It is clear from a mere enumeration of these sectors that the Left is, even with its present problems and lack of cohesion, a by no means contemptible political force. There is scarcely a street or factory in the country where it is not represented. And on a number of issues—Vietnam, Apartheid, nuclear disarmament, the immigration laws—there has been a strong and impressive mobilisation of the Left. Yet its political effectiveness is in no sense equal to its potentiality and there is, everyone knows, a great deal of frustration and a considerable lack of confidence among Left-wing people.

How can this situation be improved?

Two Basic Points

I think it is first necessary to establish two basic points: (i) that it is not irrelevant in the mid-twentieth century, in the conditions obtaining in Western Europe, to talk seriously about fundamental social change; and (ii) that one of the most important problems holding back the advance of the Left in Western Europe and America is anti-communism.

The first of these points can be argued only very briefly here. I will make only three observations in this connection.

(a) Despite the apparent success of capitalism since 1945 in achieving a new lease of life in Western Europe and America and the various much-publicised 'economic miracles', there is everywhere in the capitalist sector of the world a continual and increasing contradiction between a surface prosperity and a basic inability to solve the major economic and political problems facing the societies concerned. In Britain the most striking expressions of this include the recurring balance-of-payments crises and successive colonial or neo-colonial crises (Suez, Malaysia, Cyprus, Kenya, British Guiana, Aden, Rhodesia etc.). Even the United States, by far the most powerful and 'successful' capitalist country of the century, can find no way of avoiding policies which bring it continually up against the deepest hostility and resentment all over the world.

(b) Again, despite the apparent successes of capitalism since 1945, the organised working-class movements in the major Western capitalist countries have remained immensely powerful. In contrast to previous periods of relative boom, when organised labour suffered serious and sometimes disastrous setbacks, recent Right-wing governments—Conservative in Britain, Christian-Democrat or Gaullist on the Continent—have by no means succeeded in breaking the power of the big working-class parties or trade unions. The very fact that a Labour Government was elected in 1964 after the long Tory 'never-had-it-so-good' period shows that

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immense numbers of people in this country want social changes.

(c) The need for change in Britain is in any case being pressed upon us by forces outside our control. Even if the British people were all quite content to continue in the old way in the role of world imperialist power it is quite clear that the peoples of Asia and Africa have other ideas. The changing position of Britain in the world imposes on us, even if nothing else did, the need for basic economic and political reorientation.

Anti-Communism

My second point will have to be argued rather more fully. It is that in the world situation of the nineteen-sixties it is quite impossible to achieve any serious social advance so long as communism in general and the existing countries with communist governments are regarded as the main enemy, or indeed as an enemy at all.

The reasons for this are quite clear and have little or nothing to do with what we may happen to think, as individuals or even as political parties, about particular aspects of communist policy in particular countries. We may (and most of us do) regret this or that aspect of, say, Chinese or Soviet policy or deplore this or that by-product of the socialist revolution in this or that part of the world; but the fact remains that the international communist movement is by far the most powerful Left force in the world today and no-one seriously doubts that it is going to remain so.

To say this is not to say that no non-communist government is capable of bringing about any kind of social advance or to claim for the communist movement an exclusive monopoly of progressive virtue or potential. I am not arguing that everything communists have done has always been right or that no-one who is not a communist has the right to criticise communists. I am not arguing that there can or should be close parallels between the road to socialism in a country like Britain and the road taken in countries with an entirely different social and political situation and historical background.

Nor is my argument a theoretical so much as a practical one.

But I think it is essential to grasp the fact that anti-communism—by which I mean the posing of communism as some kind of fundamental threat or enemy—at this stage in history is not just something that communists object to: it is something that prevents the entire Left—non-communist as well as communist—from advancing at all.

Let me give some examples to clarify my point.

Without decisive cuts in arms expenditure and military commitment overseas it is impossible to envisage any relatively rapid improvements in social services in Britain. On this the Left is agreed. But you cannot effectively argue for decisive cuts in military expenditure (except from an absolute pacifist position which most people reject) unless you argue against the doctrine used to justify the present expenditure, i.e. that Britain is threatened in some way by communism—by Russia or China or some allegedly subversive movement (with Russia or China 'behind' it) somewhere or other.

You cannot argue effectively for American withdrawal from Vietnam unless you argue against the view that what is going on in Vietnam is communist aggression and explain what is actually happening.

You cannot effectively oppose the line of appeasement of the Ian Smith government in Rhodesia unless you argue against Harold Wilson's contention that the greatest danger in Africa (greater than the consequences of Smith) is the possible appearance of "the Red Army in blue berets" (Tory cries of 'hear, hear!').

You cannot effectively argue for more militant and democratic trade unions unless you argue against the discrimination against communists in certain important unions.

You cannot argue for a general strengthening of the Left in contrast to the Right unless you actively oppose all the bans and proscriptions and blacklists which are justified by the Right on the grounds that communists are out to wreck the Labour movement. And you cannot effectively oppose such arguments unless you begin to explain what the Communist Party's policy actually is.

I think it has to be faced by all Left-wingers that there is all the difference in the world between disagreement (even strong disagreement) with this or that aspect of communist policy and an attitude towards communists which sees them as being on the other side from 'us'.

Is Anti-Communism a Key Issue?

I want to emphasise that I raise these points not in a spirit of self-justification of the Communist Party and all its works but because a failure to face their implications is preventing the Left *as a whole* from advancing. It is important that we in the Communist Party should get rid of any obstacles or actions on our part that hinder unity. It is also important that the non-Communist Left should not underestimate the role of anti-communism as a keystone of Right-wing Labour policy. Many good Left-wingers think that it is a problem that can be by-passed by silence. They themselves are not anti-communist, but they hesitate to bring out in public the necessary refutations of anti-communism, fearing that this would result in their being tarred with the brush used for the communists themselves.

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But this is something that cannot be run away from. The Left can only advance on the basis of a different policy from the Right-wing and a more progressive one. There is no other way. And it is one of the facts of life in the mid-twentieth century that you cannot in practice formulate an alternative, Left policy without adopting a different attitude to communism from that of the Right. Unless the Left says clearly and unequivocally that communism is not the enemy and explains this to millions of people, then the Left constantly finds that the ground is cut away from beneath its feet: for if communism *is* the enemy, then the Right's policy is very largely justified.

I make these points somewhat insistently because I believe them to be true and important; but I also make them with care. For it could seem as though I were trying to force the issue of communism versus anti-communism in a rather mechanical and unhelpful way. I certainly do not want to suggest that the dogmatic posing of the question "Communism: are you for it or against it?" is the key immediate question for the British people or the British Left today. I am not suggesting that the Left has no place for people who are not communists or for those who do not want, at this point, to decide whether they are communists or not. What I am arguing is that unless the Left sees the combating of anti-communism as one of its essential functions it cannot fulfil the most essential function of all, the bringing about of progressive social change.

It is not for me, as a communist, to tell you what you, who are not a communist, ought to think. That would be both impertinent and unrealistic. What I am, I think, entitled to say is that, since we have pretty clearly, as far as our political aims go, a lot in common, we should try seriously to discover on what we can unite and on what, at the moment, we must agree to differ. And we should recognise that our united actions will be the more effective if they are not confined to separate, more or less isolated issues, but become part and parcel of a coherent, organised campaign for an all-round Leftward-turning policy that could give the British political scene a new look.

The Basis for a Leftward Turn

I should like to put forward at this point some suggestions for the sort of immediate programme that could unite the Left in Britain and make it a more effective force. They are suggestions arising out of our recent Party congress, and I want to stress that we put them forward as a basis for discussion, not as minimum demands. You may find some of them ill-chosen or inadequately formulated; if so we ask you to say so and to put forward alternative propositions for consideration.

The first group of points are negative ones, based on the belief that certain present trends of Government policy are fatal and should be resisted. Unless, we feel, the Left gets together to oppose them, these trends in present policy will not merely prevent any advance towards socialism but will lead to the defeat of the Labour Government and a return of the Tories.

(i) *Reject the Government's Incomes Policy*

We have to recognise that the attempt to persuade the working class to accept 'wage restraint' under capitalism and to treat Labour and 'Management' (the new polite word for Capital) as erring equals is a policy which, insofar as it is not merely futile, can only result in drawing the teeth of the working-class movement and strengthening the position of the monopolists.

(ii) *No anti-Trade Union legislation*

We are not against any changes in the trades unions: obviously there are many unsatisfactory features in the present set-up. But the immediate and overwhelming danger is that measures will be introduced which strike at the very basis of trade unionism including the right to strike.

(iii) *No rent or rate increases*

(iv) *Rejection of the Government's Immigration Act*

It is fatal to make the least concession to the various forms of racialism which are on the increase in Britain. Any attempt, veiled or not, to deal with the immigration question on racialist lines or on lines which encourage racialist feeling must be opposed.

(v) *End Britain's support for U.S. policy in Vietnam*

(vi) *Stop appeasing the Smith Government in Rhodesia*

(vii) *End the repression in Aden, Malaysia etc and abandon the whole "East of Suez" policy*

(viii) *Stop manufacturing nuclear weapons. No MLF or ANF*

These cover, I suggest, the main negative trends which have to be opposed if the rot is to be stopped and a situation achieved in which progressive advance becomes a practical possibility, and around them all there is already considerable feeling and activity. But of course every negative criticism of present policy has to be accompanied by positive proposals for an alternative policy. The following suggestions do not 'balance' the previous criticisms point by point; but they also are offered as a basis for discussion:

(i) *Fight for higher wages and pensions*

(ii) *A Government-imposed price-stop*

(iii) *Reduction of interest charges to local authorities and of mortgage rates*

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(iv) *Steel nationalisation as a first step to a systematic attack on the power of the monopolies*

(v) *Increase the Corporation and Capital Gains tax*

(vi) *Decisive cuts in military expenditure and extension of social services, especially health and education*

(vii) *Positive support for the independence movements of the colonial peoples*

(viii) *New initiatives in foreign policy towards disengagement, disarmament and positive forms of peaceful co-existence*

The object behind these suggestions is, as I have said, to explore the possible basis for achieving sufficient unity on the Left to make changes feasible. I think it is important to stress that the object of the Communist Party is not to try to bring down the Labour Government but to help thrash out with the rest of the Left a practical policy which could be fought for within the Labour Movement as an alternative to the present Right-wing policy.

The issue cannot, in my opinion, be satisfactorily put in such terms as "Should we or shouldn't we oppose Harold Wilson's government?" Obviously to oppose Wilson's policies in such a way as would lead to the return of the Tories will help nobody. At the same time, to support policies which themselves can only lead to the discrediting of the Labour Government and the return of the Tories will help nobody either.

Longer-term Perspectives

I have dealt first with a possible policy of immediate action because it is not much use talking about longer-term perspectives unless we can agree on the next steps—or at least see the possibility of agreement. But I realise that agreement on immediate policies is itself to some extent dependent on having a clearer long-term vision of the future.

You are entitled to ask me "What are the Communist Party's motives in putting forward such suggestions? Why did the Communist Party at its recent Congress have above the platform the slogan 'Unite the Left for Socialist Advance'? How does the Communist Party see the future of the Left?"

These are not, of course, questions that can be answered in a few sentences and the answers I give here—quite apart from the fact that they are only one person's answers—are bound to be incomplete. But I will do what I can.

The Communist Party has always seen itself as a part of the Labour movement. In our programme *The British Road to Socialism* (adopted in 1951 and revised in 1957) we envisage the advance to socialism as the work of the Left movement as a whole, of communists, socialists and other progressive people working together. We do not present the Communist Party as *anti*-Labour Party or as the potential rival of the Labour Party. We see the decisive steps towards socialism being taken by a government with a parliamentary majority which includes both Communists and Labour people. It should go without saying that Communists recognise that in any Left alliance—whether with specific limited objectives or of a more permanent kind—there must be give and take and no one party or group can expect to have its own way at the expense of others.

The main problem of Left advance, of course, is how to win the majority of the Labour Party for a Left policy. We Communists do not believe this can be done simply through an inner struggle within the Labour Party itself. For the Right-wing has always controlled the machinery of the Labour Party.

We believe that the key question is the development of mass struggle, the taking of politics into the streets and factories, the building and activising of vast powerful popular organisations in which large sections of the people fight for their progressive demands: such organisations as the trade unions, the peace movement, youth groups, tenants' associations, anti-racialist organisations. This is a conception of politics which is anathema to the Right-wing, and understandably; but it is the very essence of any Left-wing conception of politics for it is based on the idea of helping the mass of the people to recognise their power to change society.

It is, I suggest, only when they have the power of the mass movements behind them that the Labour Left can hope to win a dominant position in the Labour Party. But this development of a powerful Left popular movement cannot, in the nature of things, be organised and led exclusively (or even, I think, primarily) from within the Labour Party, for the Right-wing leadership is opposed to such developments and will always use its power to thwart them. One of the reasons why a communist party is necessary is its ability to help organise and give coherent leadership to the mass movements. As John Gollan has put it: "We can operate nationally across the limitations and boundaries of the various bodies of the Labour movement", and we can do so "only because we are an independent organised political party."

I do not believe the Left can advance in Britain until it is able to operate as a broad, clearly recognisable, organised force putting forward a clear and comprehensive alternative policy to that of the Right wing. And I cannot see, for myself, how such a development can arise until there is a larger and more powerful communist party. For this reason I see the building of the communist party as an absolutely vital priority in the general strengthening of the Left. This will involve, among other things, the development of the Communist Party as an electoral force; for no-one will take really seriously

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the growth of the Left until its power begins to be expressed in substantial votes and the election of councillors and M.P.s.

Some Left Labour people, I know, find this argument unpalatable. How can you communists, they say, sincerely want Left unity and even talk about the possibility at some future stage of a united socialist party, and yet run candidates against Labour candidates in elections?

I understand their doubts; but I think they should ask themselves how the Right-wing is ever to be fought effectively if electoral action is ruled out. A large Communist vote may antagonise the Right-wing, but it greatly strengthens the position of the Left, both outside and inside the Labour Party. It makes possible, for instance, the serious consideration of a jointly sponsored candidate or group of candidates, some Labour, some Communist. Does any Left-winger seriously doubt that the presence of Willie Gallacher and Phil Piratin in Parliament strengthened the Left, or that the election of even a small group of Communist M.P.s would not do so again? I think it is an illusion to imagine that the Right-wing of the Labour Party will ever be beaten except by a show of strength on the Left. And the only strength, ultimately, of the Left lies in the actual needs and fighting spirit of the people. The Right may pin its faith on tactical manoeuvres and opportunist tactics; the Left's great source of strength is that it alone, in the long run, can give the people what they want. It is important not to forget this.

The Communist Party in Britain today may not be numerically the largest section of the Left; but it is, because of its position as a national, independent, socialist political party with its own daily newspaper, the most coherent and (I think it's true to say) the best-organised section. I do not make these points in a propagandist or polemical spirit but simply because I think it is necessary to be objective.

I do not see any contradiction between building the Communist Party and working for Left unity. On the contrary, I do not see how at this stage one is possible or useful without the other. I see our Left Labour friends as, to a considerable degree, captives within the Right-wing dominated Labour Party until such a time as a united Left movement strong enough to carry the day has been built. And I see the existence of a really strong Communist Party as the best guarantee that such a Left movement will in fact come into being.

You may disagree with me about this. All right. But I hope that, nevertheless, you will understand my point of view and recognise that it is one which provides a basis for mutual respect and working unity.

We communists do not expect every Left-winger to agree with our policy and perspectives (if they did they would already have joined our party). Nor do we feel inclined to adopt a self-righteous attitude to our own activities. No section of the British Left, including the Communist Party, has been so successful during the last twenty years that it can afford to be complacent.

I put forward our proposals for the maximum Left unity in sincerity and confidence. I think we should not underestimate our power any more than we should underestimate our problems. The world, whatever the muddle-headed and disenchanted may think, is moving Leftwards.

I hope you will consider the proposals contained in this letter and comment on them. We shall be very willing to examine any suggestions you bring forward and express our views on them. We believe that a dialogue on the future of the Left can be of great value.

Fraternally,
ARNOLD KETTLE.

WORLD MARXIST REVIEW

1965—No. 12

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John Berger: Success and Failure of Picasso

Barbara Niven

THIS book of Berger's, a Penguin publication now on sale throughout London's bookshops, very much in display also under the arms of young people in the streets of central London, is a great event for Marxists. Not since the passionate and concentrated contribution of Christopher Caudwell in the '30s to a Marxist analysis of culture has the quiet been broken so formidably in Britain with a Marxist challenge on ideas presented in a popular form. I am not, of course, disregarding the flow of fine but much more restricted publications in the field of Marxist ideas from Lawrence and Wishart and from the Communist Party; nor am I overlooking the phenomenal recent success of Ernst Fischer's *Necessity of Art*—done also in a popular form. I am rejoicing in the new fact that an English Marxist thinker has come into the very public arena with—so to speak—trumpet and bells. Berger's years of stimulating articles on art, his first novel *A Painter of our Time* which itself was aesthetic thinking in a new form, are contained as a living process to make possible this tremendously integrated analysis of Picasso seen within the 20th Century.

The high stimulus and excitement of this book is its power to connect. This creative quality, the Marxist challenge in a field where disconnection has become more and more rigorous in bourgeois thinking in the West, is close indeed to art itself. Art as a human relationship, through which people come to change themselves, to see themselves and their environments in new ways, is essentially a process of participation. Berger has found a way to deepen this concept profoundly, through his critique of Picasso, and so to widen the scope of our participation in that human relationship *as a process.*

The understanding of process, of Picasso himself within the brilliantly constructed context of this century's processes and conflicts, is what this book is about.

The Reviews

And as far as conflict is concerned, that is also what the reviews of it have been about. Because the total avoidance of the main ideas presented in them can be so clearly read, because their shadow-boxing is so obvious, in place of debate or counter-challenge on the score of ideas, I give them first, regarding them as a telling indication of the fragmentation of the essentially ignoring either-ors, that serve for thought in the current field of art when the polarisation of central ideas is absent. And therefore, the lack of capacity to diagnose them when they are there.

All the more serious Sunday papers gave the book main reviews: most of them seize on the misconception that Berger equates the "collectivity of Cubism" with the subjective showing of sex. I give short extracts omitting this misconception which I shall write of later. "Politico as Critic" was the *Sunday Telegraph*'s. "This is a fascinating and in some ways a brilliant book" writes Edwin Mullins. He observes the two rare virtues of Berger in writing only when he has something positive to say, and in insisting, even in a century dominated by abstract painting, that all art be judged in terms of human experience. But then—"the guts of what Berger has to say is that for 20 years Picasso has not known what to paint because he is lonely". And the view that Berger carefully prepared his stage in order to drop on to it the idea that Picasso failed after the war because he ignored the chance international communism offered him of becoming "the artist of the emerging world". The argument of the book short-circuits, is this critic's opinion.

"Picasso dismissed" was the *New Statesman*'s critic's lead—

> "a long, intricate, brilliantly controversial sermon on Picasso's failure as an artist. Picasso has had occasional successes but they are partly attributable to others . . .". "Berger's 'Marxist' approach to 'Guernica' is a travesty of Marxist criticism. He contrasts it unfavourably with a well-known-painting by the Communist (Mexican) artist Siquieros, a heavy-handed bit of melodramatic realism which he thinks was based on a child screaming in a Spanish Civil War newsreel. This apparently makes it 'authentic' . . . as far as I can make out he intends us to understand that Picasso's Spain is backward so Picasso is backward too, and Guernica appeals 'to nothing more than our instinct for survival'. As I said at the beginning, Picasso's failure as an artist began on the day he was born. He just can't win."

Then there was the *Sunday Times*' modest-sized contribution.

> "Outside the register office at which the marriage of art and communism should long ago have been

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formalised, one wedding guest goes on waiting hopefully: Mr. Berger. Why *can't* the bride and groom get together? Why, in 1953-54, was Picasso more interested in his own waning sexual prowess than in the possibilities of Agitprop? This is the true subject of this obsessive, intermittently penetrating book, which would better have been called 'The Success and Failure of the Communist Party in getting its hooks on Picasso'."

"Behind the Picasso Myth" was the *Observer*'s. Nigel Gosling says

"There is no doubt that this is one of the most stimulating books on art to appear for years. But this should make us all the more careful about its content. A half-truth elevated to a total statement can be more misleading than a lie. The success and failure of John Berger is that his brilliant advocacy lends persuasion to a dubious case."

The nub of Berger's argument, he writes, is that

"After 1943 Picasso faded away. Contrary to the precedent of almost all great painters in the past, he failed to mature and this failure was due to his inability to find suitable subjects."

A Bergerican compound of perceptive truth, half-truth and total misunderstanding, he claims.

A. Alvarez in the *Spectator* is more outspoken. John Berger's attack on Picasso, he calls it, under the name of "The Patient Explainer". His review concludes—

"I suspect that, for all his cleverness and insight, Berger fundamentally prefers the clichés of the Marxist view of history and brotherhood to Picasso's shocked and original vision. The reason is not that he is immune to new ideas—he is full of them himself—but because he is a sentimentalist. And the essence of sentimentalism is to reduce—or inflate—all feelings to one comfortable commonplace. So though he cuts helpfully through much of the nonsense surrounding the master, he leaves the genius of the man untouched. It lies in the certainty of Picasso's intuitions, and his refusal to put in their place any fabricated answers, however reassuring, however theoretically acceptable."

How "comfortable" those "clichés of Marxism" are in Berger's book can be appreciated from the following (I quote):

"The gifts of an imaginative artist are often the outriders of the gifts of his period. Frequently the new abilities and attitudes become recognizable in art and are given a name before their existence in life has been appreciated. That is why a love of art which accompanies a fear or rejection of life is so inadequate . . . Art is the nearest to an oracle that our position as modern scientific men can allow us. What happens to an artists' gifts may well reveal, in a coded or cyphered way, what is happening to his contemporaries . . . So it is with Picasso. The waste of his genius, or the frustration of his gifts, should be a fact of great significance for us. Our debt to him and to his failures, if we understand them properly, should be enormous."

Picasso has remained a *living* example . . . He has not stopped working. He has not lied. He has not allowed his personal desperation to destroy his vitality or his delight in energy. He has not become politically—and therefore humanly—cynical. He has never, in any field, become a renegade. We cannot write him off. He has achieved enough to show us what he might have achieved. Because he is undefeated, he remains a living reproach. But a reproach against what? . . . Picasso is *the* typical artist of the middle of the 20th century because his is the success story *par excellence*. Success has been Picasso's destiny . . . (Picasso "dismissed"?)

"His experience proves that success and honour as offered by bourgeois society should no longer tempt anyone. It is a question of refusing for the sake of self-preservation . . . what the bourgeoisie offer now is not worth having.

On the contrary, the *dis*comfort of this view to critics who travel with the speeded continuum of London's bourgeois art production, of ever more youthful successes, from year to year, empirically accepting the fragmentations as change, as moving somewhere, must be acute. With no theory to think with, they must reduce dialectical materialism itself to a shadow, to a cliché. They do not challenge it; with what counter theory would they do that? There is only the endless permissiveness called freedom for the artist. To which Berger's uncomfortable answer is that the "absolute freedom" of the contemporary artist in bourgeois society is comparable to the theoretical freedom of the unemployed. A very bitter freedom indeed. His analysis of the dualism now at the heart of the bourgeois attitude to art is one of the penetrating theses of his book, vital to the understanding of Picasso himself. "On the one hand" writes Berger "the glory and mystery of genius; on the other, the work of art as a saleable commodity. You have only to listen to any art dealer today to hear the two in grotesque juxtaposition . . . the phrases mount like an incantation."

Berger's Analysis

It is the integration of Berger's analysis of Picasso within the 20th century which these critics assail but with isolated misconceptions for which shadow-boxing, I repeat, is the only word. Because the structure is dialectical materialist thinking, the reader must allow himself to be absorbed into thinking, understanding, within the context, not separated from it. This way the truth and also the perceptive brilliance of the book is to be found and held. Contradictions, conflicts, are analysed with the full engagement of social reality and of psychological insight. As in these two statements:

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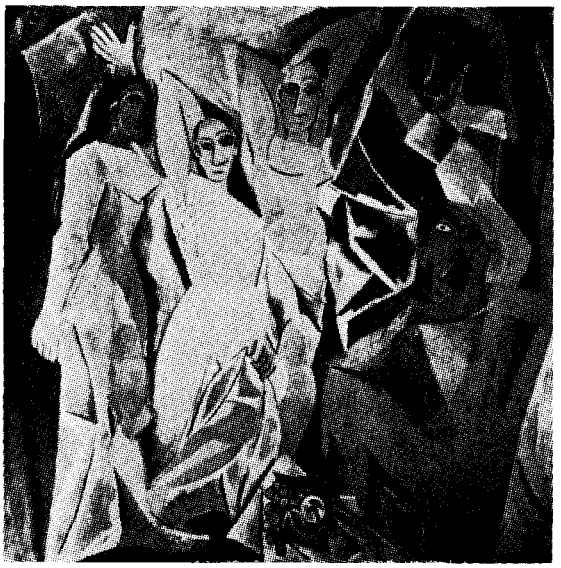
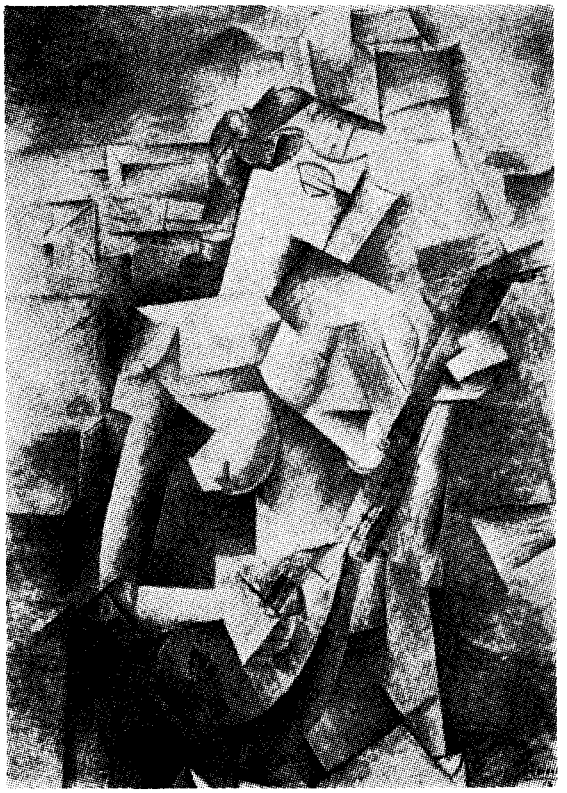


Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907.



Girl with Mandolin, 1910.

Bull, Horse and Female Matador(Marie Thérèse) 1934.

Head of a Horse, 1937.

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> "Picasso is the most famous painter in the world and his fame rests upon his modernity. He is the undisputed emperor of modern art. And yet in his attitude to art and to his own destiny as an artist there is a bias which is not in the least modern and which belongs more properly to the beginning of the 19th century. Furthermore there seems to be a connexion between his historical ambiguity and the nature of his success." . . . "We can see very precisely how the success from which he has suffered has harmed him. It would be quite wrong to say that Picasso has lost his personal integrity—on the contrary he has remained obstinately true to his original self. The harm done is that he has been prevented from developing. And this has happened because he has been deprived of contact with modern reality . . . Picasso has been assimilated into European bourgeois society—and this society is now essentially unreal."

Berger shows Picasso as a Spaniard, in the period into which he was born. "Only then, I believe, have we a hope of understanding his spirit." Born in the middle class, in this country separate from the rest of Europe with a predominantly feudal economy, with "unchanging poverty and a terrible equilibrium", Picasso encountered anarchism—Bakunin's anarchism—in Barcelona as a student. He compares Bakunin's "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge" with one of Picasso's remarks, "A painting is a sum of destructions". He points out that the Spanish anarchists' view "ignores all processes of development and concentrates into a single, almost mystical moment or act all the powers of an avenging angel born of centuries of unchanging suffering. He takes a phrase from the Spanish aristocratic thinker Ortega y Gasset to describe Picasso—*a vertical invader*. Picasso came up from Spain through the trap-door on to the stage of Europe, in Paris. Quite soon he became a conqueror. But Berger believes that he has always remained aware, a vertical invader. That this and the fact that he was a child prodigy has influenced his attitude to art throughout his life—"Painting is stronger than I am. It makes me do what it wants" said Picasso at 82. Or again "In my opinion to search means nothing in painting, to find is the thing." "By respecting this mystery", writes Berger, "he has become the most expressive artist of our time, but there was also a negative result. Picasso denies the power of reason. He denies the causal connexion between searching and finding."

In this, Berger holds, Picasso is unique. It is this that has caused him to rely more and more exclusively upon the mystery of his own prodigious creativity, this that led, eventually, from 1921 on, to the legend of Picasso as a magician.

I am diving deep into the structure of the book with the separateness of Picasso because this, evaluated in the marvellously clear European context Berger builds of the early years (to 1914) of this century, is one of his most excellent achievements. He shows how men had been brought to the point where they could actually see the means of creating a world of material equality, brought by Monopoly Capitalism, which suggested the possibility of treating the whole world as a single unit, how the stage was set then for later possibilities. He shows in the most revealing detail how Cubism became possible, as a philosophical equivalent of the revolution taking place in scientific thinking which itself was related to new materials and means of production. I agree emphatically with Berger in saying that Cubism was a transformation far more than a stylistic revolt against what had preceded it, that it changed the nature of the relationships between the painted image and reality and so placed man in a position which he had never been in before. Cubism in its use of new materials was the challenge to the bourgeois concept of art as precious and valuable—in its structure it was dialectical materialism in painting. What the Cubist painters wanted was an art that belonged to the new century; they created the possibility of revealing processes instead of static states. "They painted the good omens of the modern world."

Berger's view is that Picasso provoked Cubism by his 1907 painting of five naked women (Demoiselles d'Avignon), the shock of which he describes as the vertical invader's "propaganda by deed". For the first time in the fury of his work on it his skill disappeared in struggle. It was the beginning, in Picasso's life, of close work with Leger, Juan Gris, Marcoussis, Braque. From then his friends, who had felt the shock of the painting, drew closer and worked together—out of this the revolution of Cubism developed. The next seven years contained the discoveries of Cubism, made together. "It was, I believe, the only time when Picasso felt entirely at home. It is from that period, as much as from Spain, that he has since been exiled." Then came the war, the 1917 Revolution, and "the age of essential politics had begun".

A Bourgeois Success

The group was dispersed by the war, Picasso the Spaniard remaining unconcerned by it. And in 1917 Picasso was persuaded to collaborate on a Diaghilev ballet. Picasso was drawn into serving the bourgeois world. Once again he was the artist prodigy with magic skill. He became a bourgeois success.

It is difficult to detach oneself from the process of it, in writing of this book. I must quote Berger on Picasso's painting between 1930-1944.

> "All the great works of this period—and in my view it is the period when, the Cubist years excepted, he produced his best paintings and sculpture—

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> share the same preoccupation: a preoccupation with physical sensations so strong and deep that they destroy all objectivity and reassemble reality as a complement of pain or pleasure."

Those who visited the exhibition of Picasso in the Tate Gallery four years ago will recall with what a sense of physical relief and joy one stepped from the gallery of the late '20s, a period in which Picasso had retreated into himself and was painting oppressive torture and frenzy (chiefly through women's heads and bodies) into the luscious light and colour of his paintings of Marie Thérèse with whom he was passionately in love. Berger has said that it is through the experience of his body that he painted erotic pictures, and through his physical imagination, heightened by sexual experience, that he painted the war pictures. "In these paintings of the '30s he has made us newly aware of sensation. He abstracts sex from society, returns it to nature where it becomes complete in itself." And with this intensity of sensation he also imagines suffering.

> "Guernica is a painting about how Picasso imagines suffering: just as when he is working on a painting or sculpture about making love the intensity of his sensations makes it impossible for him to distinguish between himself and his lover, just as his portraits of women are often self portraits of himself found in them, so here in Guernica he is painting his own suffering as he daily hears the news from his own country."

It is a profoundly subjective work and its power derives from this.

The critic who discovered Berger's reduction of "Guernica" in relation to Siquieros' "Echo of a Scream" might have been examining some other book; he is simply comparing the timelessness of Picasso's painting to the representation of the modern means of war by Siquieros—and needed that comparison to assist the reader to plumb the timelessness and subjective depth of the greatest picture of war of this century.

The Communist Party

Berger's major theme is that by 1943 this second great period of Picasso's life in painting was over. The vertical invader, alone again after the seven years of enormous joint development of Cubism from 1908-1914, he had not had to leave his own body in the search for his subjects. Now, with the liberation of France in 1944, he was impelled to join the French Communist Party. In that famous explanation of his he said "I have always been an exile, now I am no longer one"—"I have never felt more complete"—"Again I am among my brothers". Berger says he asked for bread (such as perhaps the Communist Party could not have supplied) but what they offered him was a stone: that as a Communist artist with all his power he was wasted despite his world-wide contribution of the doves to the peace movement, despite his personal encouragement to others against the nuclear war threat. Picasso hoped to come out of his exile (the vertical invader from Spain) and the Communists separated the man from his work at the very time when his need was to begin a new phase, to find how to discount subjects from within his own body. It was, Berger says, as though he could do no wrong because what he did was never examined: a disguise for him was stitched together out of words. Hence the challenging statement at the close of the book regarding "failure of revolutionary nerve"—on Picasso's part in 1917, on the part of the French Communist Party in 1945.

The first alludes to Picasso's entry into the bourgeois world with the Diaghilev ballet: the second is indeed a challenge. I believe that what Berger has said about our party being more than a political party is true. He has written "It is a school of philosophy, an army, an agent of the future: at its noblest it is a fraternity." Who, above all those most engaged in the field of ideas, has not derived motive force from this? Yet in the visual arts, the Communist Parties of the West as a whole—with the exception, of course, of many individual members such as those in the then powerful left movement of the Artists International Association—were deeply committed to the theoretical rejection, from the Soviet Union, of movements of painting from the Impressionists onward, and of acceptance of what was later called Socialist Realism. For the revolutionary imagination of the French Communist Party to have been capable of such a full reversal of understanding in the visual arts in particular—the slowest of the arts in which to be able to comprehend the new—would perhaps have been impossible even in that year of huge new political and cultural possibilities for Communists and the left in France. Yet in essence I feel and accept the tragic failure to seize the new impact. I feel it both ways.

Berger is right when he says that painters need time to uncover their genius, and that there are no examples of great painters and sculptors whose work has not gained in profundity as he grew older. He is right, I am sure, that if a great new impetus *had* been given to Picasso through his sense and understanding of peoples' liberation, he too would have found the full depth of his genius.

Berger suggests that Picasso should have left Europe, to which he, the vertical invader, never really belonged; that with the aid of the world Communist Movement he could have travelled to emerging countries, become the artist of the emerging world in challenge to "privileged" Europe. Instead he became the King of La Californie (his

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house in Cannes). He became a national monument, a millionaire, and in blind struggle for a subject on which to work. So that the work itself is a decline on the paintings before 1945.

In 1953 he made a series of autobiographical drawings about his own fate. Those who saw them then at the Marlborough Gallery with all the drama of tragic irony played upon in 180 combinations of the old man, the young woman, and sometimes a monkey, must have been astonished that critics could praise the line, the fertility of combinations, without painfully responding to the confession. Berger's analysis of them is one of the most perceptive passages in the book. Picasso's confession, he says, is even more comprehensive than a poignant lament for lost youth. In the theme of Artist and Model is the despair of the

> "noble savage, who, alone, abstracted from history and insulated from any social reality, is forced back until finally he is left with all his imagination unaccounted for by the pure nature which he must worship. It is the very idea of art that is attacked by Nature."

From the whole book, profoundly understanding analysis of Picasso in his time, also emerge the new horizons for art "because the indivisibility of man and his interests, and the unity of the world are essential points of departure in every field of thought and planning from physics to art".

No two cultures for John Berger.

Co-operative Movement: Aims and Principles

Sergey Pronin[1]

IT was of great interest to read Comrade Dunman's article on the co-operative movement's problems published in your magazine last March.

Topical among the problems of the international co-operative movement is the question of the principles of co-operative organisations, and the underlying questions of the political strategy and economic tactics of co-operative organisations developing in different socio-economic conditions.

Aims of Co-operative Organisations

I agree completely with Comrade Dunman's suggestion that the problem of contemporary co-operative principles should be regarded in the light of the socio-economic tasks of the co-operative movement. Only social aims, and not any historical traditions, however respected, determine the inner forms of co-operation. This is a vital approach to the problem. There is no point now, for example, in claiming that all co-operatives everywhere, in Central Africa and in the United States and in the Soviet Union, must apply the principle of "paying dividends on purchases" if they are to have the right to be regarded as "genuine" co-operatives. It is entirely impracticable to gauge the "genuineness" of co-operation by this criterion, as it is obvious from the start that in the middle of the twentieth century neither this nor any other Rochdale principle can adequately convey the organisational forms of co-operative organisations conforming to the general aims and specific tasks of co-operatives in individual countries.

This thought of Comrade Dunman is borne out by the facts. The point is that the diversity of forms of co-operation, the deep differences in the socio-economic conditions obtaining in the new developing countries, the differences between the countries of state monopoly capitalism and the socialist countries, are making new and extremely varied demands on these organisational forms of co-operative organisations.

It is also necessary to consider the fact that many countries are at different stages of socio-economic development and that each of these stages, in turn, produces its own specific conditions for co-operation. For example, in Britain in the period of pre-monopoly capitalism, the Rochdale pioneers operated in conditions vastly different from the conditions of the rule of giant trade and industrial monopolies and the bourgeois state in which the co-operative movement of that country is developing today. In the USSR, in the period of the New Economic Policy in the 1920s, when exploiting

[1] Author of a Soviet study of the British Co-operative Movement.

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classes still existed, the co-operative movement faced different specific tasks from those it does today, when the foundations of a Communist society are being laid.

It is quite natural therefore that the limited set of Rochdale principles, worked out a hundred years ago, is today unable to provide an exact definition of the typical features and forms of co-operative organisations developing in such a diversity of social conditions in which the balance of class forces, the classes themselves, the living standards, the structure of consumption, etc. are all different. Here we approach the question of the class aims of co-operation which was raised by Comrade Dunman and on which I would like to make some observations. The question stands as follows: is it at all possible in these conditions to find any distinctive features of the organisational structure of co-operation? If we approach the matter from class positions, if we proceed from the social aims of co-operation, such features apparently can be found.

It will be recalled that in the past and today co-operatives emerged and emerge mainly as organisations designed to improve the economic and social lot of the working people: the working class, the peasants, the farmers, the intelligentsia, the craftsmen, the small trade bourgeoisie. The fact that today there is no longer any small trade bourgeoisie in some countries and, as yet, no working class in others, does not alter anything. The task remains the same—to improve the lot of the working masses. Nor is anything altered by the changes in the professional structure of the working class, the structure of its consumption, etc. in some capitalist countries. Changes do occur, but the working class remains the working class, and its co-operative organisations are called upon to protect its interests.

The strategic task of co-operation—to improve the economic and social conditions of the working people—remains unchanged also in different socio-economic systems, even though the methods employed by the co-operatives in their practical work may differ considerably. Under capitalism, co-operatives benefit the working people as collective organisations pooling their labour or small savings. Besides this, co-operatives under capitalism can improve the lot of their members also by participating in the economic and political struggle against the pressure of capitalist monopolies. Under socialism, the function of protection against monopolies falls away, but the ability of co-operation to produce benefits for the masses of the workers by pooling their labour, their savings, by the rational planned development of co-operative services with the help of the state and within the framework of a general nation-wide plan, remains. In economically underdeveloped countries, co-operation facilitates for the working people the transition from natural to commodity economy, helps raise the living standards, and contributes, along with state-enacted measures, to the economic advancement of the country in question. In those countries where co-operatives are closely connected with the broad masses of the working people, they produce not only economic but also social benefits, helping as they do to strengthen the historically progressive skills of collectivism and democracy.

The Same Principal Aim

Of course, the socio-political position of the working class and the other working people under capitalism and under socialism is vastly different. Hence the profound differences in the political role and economic status of the co-operative movement. But these differences cannot obscure the above-mentioned principal aim of co-operation, which remains the same for all co-operatives.

In the developed capitalist countries, for example, co-operation uniting as it does members of the working classes, theoretically (speaking of the socially active co-operators, both socialist and non-socialist) counterposes itself to capitalism and has for its aim to replace the capitalist system, predicated on the pursuit of profit, with a system of collective catering to the social and individual needs of the working people.

In the socialist countries, too, co-operation unites members of the working classes. But as there is no bourgeoisie in them, no incentive of capitalist gain with all attendant negative consequences, the co-operatives, while retaining their class composition, help improve the economic and social conditions of individual workers, workers' collectives, and the entire socialist state.

From all this one can draw the conclusion that despite inevitable differences in their practical methods of work, the principal aim of co-operative organisations is to improve the economic and social conditions of *the working people* by pooling their labour, their property, their savings, by their collective work. But this does not exhaust what co-operatives in all countries of the world have in common.

Co-operation is a form of public property which plays a progressive socio-economic role under capitalism, and an even more important social-transforming role in socialist society. The Rochdale pioneers attached great importance to this aspect of co-operation, and it was precisely on the idea of co-operative public property that they built their theory of transforming the private capitalist system into a co-operative community. Though this idea did not receive concrete expression in the Rochdale principles, it was partially reflected in the ICA rules

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of 1937, which spoke of the need "to replace the system of private enterprises, striving for profit, with a co-operative system". To be sure, the idea of a co-operative community is an utopia, but the thought of abolishing capitalism is progressive.

The extremely great importance of putting the question in this way is illustrated by the position of co-operatives under state monopoly capitalism, where co-operatives have to fight against capitalist monopolies, and the trade monopolies acting on their behalf are at present noticeably stepping up not only industrial, but also *trade* exploitation of the working people by hiking up prices, foisting inferior-quality goods, etc. Here co-operation can serve not only as a practical *economic* tool in the working people's struggle against monopolies, but also—on the theoretical plane—as an example of using the co-operative form of economy, though still capitalist in general, to further the interests of the working people, as a democratic form of collective economic association counterposed to the capitalist forms of joint-stock companies.

Though under socialism the co-operative movement no longer faces the task of struggle against monopolies, as these no longer exist, the task of strengthening the system of public property remains, and its importance increases tremendously. This is why the idea of the progressive role of co-operation in the development of the public form of property confirms as a whole the identity of aims of co-operative organisations.

In general, if we approach co-operation as a class movement, it becomes possible to formulate the general tasks of co-operation facing the co-operatives of the most diverse countries.

As the basis for the discussion of such a general definition one could, for example, offer the following variant of Article 8 of the ICA Rules:

Any association of persons can be regarded as a co-operative society if it has for its aim the economic and social betterment of the working people (in the first instance the working class, the peasantry, the intelligentsia) through the development of co-operative public property and through the operation of enterprises and institutions established within the framework of this property on the basis of mutual aid, collectivism and democratic government.

This formula is, firstly, based on the general task of all co-operative organisations to serve the economic and social interests of the working masses, and, secondly, underscores the socio-economic role of public co-operative property. This is why it conforms in general to both the specific practical tasks and the long-range aims of co-operative organisations of countries belonging to different socio-economic systems.

From this formula of the aims of co-operation stem the principles of its organisation. What are these principles? Some of them, to my mind, tally with the old Rochdale principles, though sometimes in a new wording, of course. Others must be formulated anew. In addition to the correct appraisement of all these principles in the conditions of capitalist countries, given in Comrade Dunman's article, I would like to formulate in a more or less specific way the principles affecting the entire international co-operative movement.

Old and New Co-operative Principles

One of the most important features of co-operation is its comprehensively democratic nature: the members of co-operatives can decide for themselves whether to join or not (voluntary membership), they govern the co-operatives in a democratic way (leadership elected, and one-member-one-vote principle), they jointly own co-operatives on the basis of relative equality (limitation of share-holding) and participate on the same basis in the distribution of surpluses and services of co-operative organisations (limitation of interest on capital, payment of dividends on purchases or participation in co-operative societies). All these features of co-operatives conform to the interests of the working people, and some of the Rochdale principles can therefore be formulated as follows, for example, as the new requisite features of co-operation:

1. The principle of voluntary membership, unrestricted for political, religious or racial motives.
2. The principle of democratic equality in ensuring elective public control and government on the one-member-one-vote basis.
3. The principle of limited distribution of co-operative income and services in proportion to capital.
4. The principle of essentially collective utilisation of co-operative incomes and services, or their distribution in proportion to the members' participation in the organisation's economic activities.

These principles of the democratic organisation of co-operatives are already widely current in almost all countries, and as a whole conform to the general tasks of the co-operative movement. They coincide in the main with the well-known principles of the Rochdale pioneers.

The 20th century has, however, made some new demands on co-operation, concerning mainly the relationship between the co-operatives and the state, and the political activities of co-operative organisations.

As regards the first of these things, it is clear to any sincere champion of co-operation that in the conditions of socialism, above all, and also to a varying extent in the developing countries, co-operation between the co-operative movement and

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the state is in the interest of both the co-operatives themselves and the society as a whole. In the capitalist countries, the state, even under capitalism, can contribute to the establishment of co-operatives helpful to the working people in that they prevent the penetration and undivided rule of big private capital in some industries. Moreover, co-operation can use government aid in one way or another to consolidate its positions in the struggle against capitalist monopolies (in this case the claim that "co-operation cannot win the battle against the monopolies without the help of the state" is not sufficiently clear, as in a *bourgeois* state co-operation cannot *win* the battle against the monopolies anyway, but can at best mitigate their pressure. As shown by recent experience, the bourgeois state cannot seriously threaten the interests of monopoly capital either through co-operation or in any other way). One must not moreover forget the other side of the medal in this question. In an article on agricultural co-operation in France, the March issue of the monthly *Cahiers du Communisme* spoke of the efforts of the authorities to subordinate co-operation to the political aims of big capital. A situation like this can develop in capitalist countries.

State Power

Of course, much in this case will depend on the nature of state power. If in the socialist countries the state power of the working class and the other working classes guarantees the utmost support for co-operation, in the capitalist countries the measure of government support for the co-operatives depends on the balance of class forces and on the degree of the state power's subordination to monopoly capital. It is natural, for instance, to expect some support for the co-operative movement of the working class and the farmers on the part of the Labour government in Britain, just as it was unnatural to expect it from the fascist governments of Germany and Italy before World War Two. Of great importance today in some cases, along with the question of state assistance, is the question of assistance to co-operatives by some other institutions.

This is why, in general, the trend toward the co-operative organisations' closer co-operation with governmental and non-governmental organisations can be summed up in the form of the following principle of the co-operative movement:

The principle of utilisation by co-operatives of outside aid, including government aid, provided it is used in the interests of the co-operative membership.

But even this principle does not fully reflect the importance of—figuratively speaking—the foreign policy of co-operation, which has increased in the past decades. The degree of co-operation's usefulness to the working people today depends to a considerable extent not only on co-operation itself, but also on how firmly the co-operative movement relies upon the progressive public forces, with whose assistance it can achieve much even in the most unfavourable conditions. In our time, when the masses of the people in all countries are becoming more active, the co-operative movement cannot remain aloof from political activities and struggle.

The Soviet poet Mayakovsky used to say, "I like the vastness of our plans, the giant strides of progress. . . ." Can Soviet co-operation stand aside from these plans and from the political party that organises their implementation?

In the capitalist countries, where struggle against the monopolies is becoming the central issue of the entire public life, where victory or defeat in the struggle against the monopolies is a matter of life and death to the co-operative movement itself, co-operation cannot isolate itself from the struggle of the political parties coming out with anti-monopoly and socialist programmes. This is also true of the other organisations participating in the struggle against the monopolies, and also in the struggle for peace.

This is why *the principle of co-operation with progressive political, trade union and other organisations in the struggle for the political, economic and social interests of the working people, in the struggle for peace*, is not only acceptable but vitally necessary for the international co-operative movement and for the national co-operative organisations.

Thus, a parallel analysis of the principal aims of co-operative organisations of the most diverse countries and of the specific conditions in which they operate makes it possible to determine a number of features that are common to all co-operative movements. These common features make it possible to formulate the general principles of co-operation as given here or in other forms. In so doing, it is quite possible to employ the Rochdale principles in one way or another, as both the Rochdale pioneers and the modern co-operators are members of the working classes. On the other hand, the introduction of new principles, too, is unavoidable, as the conditions in which the co-operatives function have changed substantially.

In conclusion, I can stress the great importance of Comrade Dunman's article which, in general, makes a successful attempt to consider in a new way a number of fundamental problems of the co-operative movement. Such attempts are extremely timely, as they can be of direct benefit to the British working class in its struggle for democracy and socialism waged in capitalist conditions, and also in the future, when the question of the practical ways of building a socialist society will arise.

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President Nkrumah on Neo-Colonialism

Emile Burns

NOT the least among Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's services to the national liberation movement, to African unity and to the socialist cause has been his presentation in book form of the outlook and theory behind his manifold practical activities. *Towards Colonial Freedom*, his *Autobiography*, *Africa Must Unite*, and *Consciencism*, have all consistently put forward the Marxist-Leninist outlook as the guiding theory of his life and work, together with its application in the conditions of Africa and the need for a United Africa to struggle effectively against imperialism and for African development along the non-capitalist road.

Now, in spite of all his preoccupations with the socialist development of Ghana, the building up of African unity, and the myriad international problems requiring his constant attention, he has succeeded in producing a new, thoroughly documented book: *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, which is outstanding in its application of Marxist-Leninist theory.

Why Neo-Colonialism

In his Introduction, Dr. Nkrumah characterises neo-colonialism, shows its origins, methods and results, and draws conclusions for the policy of the newly-independent States.

After the second world war, the imperialists realised that in their own countries there could be no return to the mass unemployment and low living standards of pre-war years; hence the "Welfare State" policy. But the continuation and increase of colonial super-profits was essential for them, and at first the imperialists attempted to preserve by force the old colonial system of exploitation. These attempts, however, were defeated by the strength and determination of the rising liberation movement, and therefore new methods of exploitation became necessary to serve the same ends. Hence arose the system of neo-colonialism.

> "Old fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished . . . but it is everywhere on the retreat . . . In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism, we have today neo-colonialism."

Dr. Nkrumah writes:

> "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside".

This direction from outside can take a variety of forms: military garrisons, or control through economic or monetary means, such as tying the trade of the neo-colonial State to the imperialist power, subsidising that State, providing civil servants for important posts, or control over foreign exchange.

The result is that foreign capital comes to be used for exploitation instead of development—"Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world."

This point is supported by reference in the 1962 Report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Per capita* output in the advanced industrial countries rose in twenty years by 60 per cent; in Africa, the rise is estimated at 10 to 20 per cent, concentrated mainly in the north and south.

And Dr. Nkrumah draws the lesson from the experience of Asia and Latin America as well as Africa:

> "The less developed world will not become developed through the goodwill or generosity of the developed powers. It can only become developed through a struggle against the external forces which have a vested interest in keeping it underdeveloped. Of these forces, neo-colonialism is, at this stage of history, the principal."

Balkanisation

Dr. Nkrumah stresses the significance of the "balkanisation" policy adopted by the imperialist powers when the independence of a former colonial country can no longer be resisted. Former united colonial territories are broken up into small non-viable States which are incapable of independent development and forced to rely upon the former imperialist power for defence and even internal security, with their economic and financial systems linked with those of the former colonial ruler.

This form of the "divide and rule" policy is illustrated from the French cutting up of their former colonial territories into separate States; the same aim was pursued by Britain in the Constitution imposed on Nigeria, dividing it into three regions;

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in the proposed division of Ghana into five regions, which however was defeated; and in the similar, now defeated, Constitution for Kenya.

As it is, West Africa for example is divided into nineteen separate independent States, with an average population (excluding Nigeria) of about 2.3 million. It is impossible for such small States to plan industrial development in isolation.

Africa's natural resources are immense, and still largely untapped. Their exploitation has been the preserve of foreign monopolies, which have made immense profits, while the primary products have gone to feed foreign industries, to the impoverishment of the countries of origin.

With independence, industrialisation is essential to raise the living standards of the people. But industrialisation requires "the total mobilisation of the continent's resources within the framework of comprehensive socialist planning and deployment". Dr. Nkrumah gives examples to drive this point home, showing the need for unity to ensure real economic independence for the separate African States.

Imperialist Finance

Chapter 3 starts with a summary of Lenin's analysis of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, based on the growth of monopoly; and this is followed by the application of this analysis to events after the second world war.

> "Post-war capitalism, which had already received one devastating blow after the first world war in the rise of the Soviet Union, took another crushing defeat in the establishment of socialist regimes in a number of countries in central and eastern Europe and in China."

On the other hand, the United States "took over from Britian the leading role in international financial monopoly", while the feverish growth of monopoly and the struggle between the monopoly groupings became more intense. The struggle for world monopolist control is evidenced both in international mergers and alliances (of which the European Common Market is an example) and in conflicts between the monopoly groupings (e.g., de Gaulle's present stand).

Dr. Nkrumah emphasises Lenin's points that imperialism is not confined to the underdeveloped sectors of the world, but that the profit rate is higher there than in the more industrialised countries. Hence the hypocrisy of "aid" from the imperialists:

> "All the instruments and mechanics of international imperialism, expressed in monopoly coalitions, are brought to bear in a general descent upon the new, needy countries. This new wave of predatory invasion of former colonies operates behind the international character of the agencies employed: financial and industrial consortia, assistance organisations, financial aid bodies and the like. Friendly co-operation is offered in the educational, cultural and social domains. . . . These are the paraphernalia of neo-colonialism, superficially offering aid and guidance; subterraneously benefiting the interested donors and their countries in old and new ways."

And he ends this chapter with the simple comment: "Before the decline of colonialism what today is known as aid was simply foreign investment."

In a later chapter on "The Mechanics of Neo-Colonialism" Dr. Nkrumah goes more fully into the methods used by the imperialists, especially the United States. He cites examples of the "offensive conditions" on which loans are offered, the use of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and other special American labour organisations to penetrate and influence African trade unions, the use of evangelism, the cinema, the Peace Corps, etc. And as the struggle sharpens, resort is had to *coups d'état* or would-be *coups*, together with political assassinations.

In a series of chapters Dr. Nkrumah shows the international monopoly groupings of finance capital which are the instigators and beneficiaries of neo-colonialism, their rivalries and their interweaving for the common aim of securing constantly expanding profit.

The lists of monopolies in various fields, with their associated and subsidiary companies and interconnections, are particularly striking, and the story of how these concerns built up their grip on Africa (and elsewhere) is briefly sketched. Practically all of Africa's natural resources are now in the hands of these international industrial and financial groupings: gold and diamonds, coal, chemicals, copper, tin, manganese, bauxite, uranium, zinc and other mineral ores, oil, timber, etc.

The story of the Union Minière du Haut Katanga and other groups concerned in the Congo shows that the interests involved range all over the capitalist world, helping to explain both the rivalries and the determination of international imperialism to keep the "independent" Congo in subjection.

The Fight Against Imperialism

Having set out in detail the massive strength of the imperialist combines and the methods through which they seek to maintain their neo-colonialist exploitation, Dr. Nkrumah says that the faint-hearted might feel they must give up the fight against them in despair.

> "Fortunately, however, history furnishes innumerable proofs of one of its own major laws: that the budding future is *always* stronger than the withering past."

He adds that though the surging popular forces may still be hampered by colonialist legacies,

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"nonetheless they advance inexorably". And from this he draws his major conclusion: that neo-colonialism

> "is *not* a sign of imperialism's strength, but rather of its last hideous gasp. It testifies to its inability to rule any longer by old methods. . . . This means that neo-colonialism *can* and *will* be defeated."

Dr. Nkrumah then outlines what has to be done to bring this about. In the first place, *unity* to defeat the neo-colonialist *divide and rule*; an all-union government for Africa; strengthening the Afro-Asia Solidarity Organisation, and linking with it the liberation forces of Latin America. To these must be added the support of the growing socialist sector of the world, and the liberation and anti-colonialist actions ("all too few yet growing") within the imperialist world itself. This political programme of unity of all the advancing forces must be backed by national plans for independent development, an external condition for which is *non-alignment*.

With the advance of science and technique, today there is no need for there to be rich and poor. Effective world pressure can change present conditions,

> "but world pressure is not exercised by appeals, however eloquent, or by arguments, however convincing. It is only achieved by deeds. . . . The danger to world peace springs not from the action of those who seek to end neo-colonialism but from the inaction of those who allow it to continue."

* * *

It is impossible for any review of *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* to bring out the full importance of Dr. Nkrumah's profound analysis of world developments from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, and the lessons drawn from both the national liberation forces of the world and the socialist and progressive movements in the imperialist countries.

It is not only an interpretation of the world of today: running through it all is Dr. Nkrumah's awareness that the job is *to change that world*, and his confidence in the ability of the people to make the change.

> "For, when all is said and done, it is the so-called little man, the bent-backed, exploited, malnourished, blood-covered fighter for independence who decides. And he invariably decides for freedom."

The Freedom of Art

Hugh MacDiarmid

I THINK the author of *The Freedom of Art*, Honor Arundel (Mrs. Alec McCrindle), has done an excellent job—a clear and comprehensive statement of the basic issues. There are, of course, many subordinate issues—some of which every now and again receive sensational publicity in the newspapers and elsewhere—which cannot be detailed and dealt with in such a small book. It is highly necessary, however, that the central theme of *The Freedom of Art* (which is not synonymous with the Freedom of the Artist) should be generally understood. Most people may be inclined to ask what it has to do with *them*—and indeed it has in the present state of affairs nothing that (so they think) directly affects the vast majority of people. So the first point to clear up is a matter of definition—what does the word "Freedom" mean; what is—and what is not—Art? It may be thought we all know what "mathematics" is, but when Einstein promulgated his theory of relativity many maths masters in our schools could make nothing of it. They had to realise that they had a great deal to *unlearn*. So with literature and the arts, a great deal generally accepted as pertaining to them may have to be jettisoned.

On these broad issues Honor Arundel is clear and concise, and while it is impossible in her space to set out all the ins and outs that have been involved in these matters throughout the centuries, and in particular the crucial importance that has been attached to them in most so-called civilised countries in the present century and last century, enough references are given to specific considerations in the contexts of literature, music, painting—and also politics and science—to enable readers to see these huge and problematical questions in the light of the whole cultural and intellectual evolution of mankind—of mankind at least in the White Man's world. We are perhaps apt to think we have a monopoly of the arts and of civilisation, but that is far from the case, and to take only one instance, the

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Chinese have a civilisation and a vast literary and artistic heritage against which all we possess is simply rudimentary and crude.

It is well to get the matter we are discussing in perspective by reading such a passage as this from C. P. Fitzgerald's *The Birth of Communist China:*

> "In the time of the T'ang or the Sung dynasties, a thousand years ago, China, just as totalitarian, as orthodox, and as authoritarian as she is today, led the world and achieved a civilisation whose works of art and literature continue to delight and astonish. The T'ang poets wrote under the shadow of a court as arbitrary and as self-assured as any politbureau. The Sung painters were the high officials of an authoritarian empire constantly preoccupied with the niceties of orthodox doctrine and persecuting the 'deviations' of their more original contemporaries. The personal history of the philosopher Chu Hsi, of the Sung period, is a tale of exile, police supervision, and persecution. The Court of the Sung 'purged', in the most approved modern manner, those of its members whose policy was no longer in favour. It cannot be said, on the evidence of past Chinese history, that a totalitarian regime cramps the genius of the Chinese people. They have never given greater proofs of genius than when under the most arbitrary and powerful governments. It is not the periods of weakness and division, when the Chinese Empire could not exercise its totalitarian claims, that are remembered as periods of great culture and high achievement. It is precisely under such emperors as Wu of the Han, the T'ang Empress Wu, the Sung autocrats, or Yung Lo of the Ming, that the Chinese achieved their greatest moment. All these were, by democratic standards, tyrants; all ruthlessly slew or liquidated anyone who opposed them, all employed the full power of the state to crush opposition, uphold orthodoxy, and impose their absolute will. These were the great figures of the Chinese past; under their rule the poets sang, the painters worked, and the philosophers wrote. Yet there was no trace of intellectual or any other liberty."

In approaching the subject-matter of Honor Arundel's book there are certain things vitally necessary. The first is to realise that as matters stand most of us have read, seen, or heard precious little of literature, art, and music. Biologists tell us that we are all—except in cases of congenital idiots or people suffering from mental disease—potentially equally equipped to appreciate and benefit from all these things. But in actual fact it is only a small *élite* that has realised its potentialities—or a fraction of its potentialities—to understand and enjoy them. The great majority of people see no need to bother about them at all. They do not realise how intimately they affect the lives of every human being. As Honor Arundel points out:

> "After all, Marx had called the nineteenth-century English realists 'the splendid brotherhood of fiction writers in England, whose graphic and eloquent pages have issued to the world more political and social truths than has been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together'."

There is a good point, too, when Honor Arundel, listing past instances of severe repression of the arts, says

> "It is possible that our comparative freedom from this direct form of political oppression in Britain today is enjoyed not only because of the democratic liberties won by the Labour movement, but also because the Establishment feels pretty secure, and because art affects such a small section of the population that its dangerousness is extremely limited."
>
> "Socialism is the only answer to the physical and moral squalor in which we live, and the arts will not only be an integral part of the good life of the future, but can now provide the spiritual refreshment we all need in our present struggles. When the working class has achieved power it will still need in Gramsci's words to 'take on the work of reconquest, to restore in full for itself and all humanity the devastated realm of the spirit'."

The Real Business of Human Life

Are knowledge, culture, the arts the real business of human life? No Communist can doubt it for a moment. Doris Lessing in her book, *The Golden Notebook*, says that she sometimes has the impression that almost everybody she meets is trying to write poems or plays or something but that few of them are not frustrated and abandon their attempts. And Miss Lessing concludes that there is this widespread urge towards creative expression in almost everybody, but that it finds no outlet in the present state of society. It has found a far greater outlet in the past half-century in the Soviet Union than anywhere else. We may think we are doing well when the Poets-in-Public poetry readings at the Edinburgh Festival attract 93 per cent capacity audiences. That is, indeed, a development. The only events which attracted 100 per cent were the Military Tattoo and Marlene Dietrich. But compare that with the enormous audiences attracted to poetry readings all over the Soviet Union—think of Yevtushenko being able to attract 10,000 people to hear him read his poems in the open air in Red Square; and think of the extraordinary occasion when after having been out of favour with the Moscow Writers' Union for a time, Pasternak was suddenly invited to a big meeting. He had not expected to be called upon to read any of his poems. But he was, and he had great difficulty in remembering them. Whenever he stuck, however, he was at once prompted by members of the audience. The poems in question had not even been published—they had been circulated in

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roneo'd copies. It is impossible to imagine such a thing happening in Great Britain or any other Western European country. But even such an astonishing example falls far short of giving any idea of the tremendous appetite for literature that has developed among the masses of the Soviet people. They have a Poetry Week annually when the bookshops are stacked with volumes of poetry. The poets come to the shops and read some of their poems and autograph copies of their books, and in that week hundreds of thousands of copies are sold. Can you imagine that happening in this country? You have only to ask how often you—or anybody you know—buy a volume of poetry. Far too many of us—even Socialists, even Party members—are neatly ticked off by the great Hungarian Marxist critic and aesthetician, George Lukacs, when he says, as Honor quotes, "Instead of the genuine tension underlying the struggle for socialism, we get the artificial tension of a detective story."

Bertold Brecht said that to understand the Marxian dialectic it is necessary to have a good sense of humour. It is also necessary to realise as Brecht says elsewhere: "Our feelings impel us towards the maximum effort of reasoning, and our reasoning purifies our feelings." The essence of the problem lies there and is in itself a sufficient answer to the cry that what our authors publish, our painters depict, our composers produce, should be immediately comprehensible to everybody. That is not only sheer nonsense, but it is basically the worst sort of Philistinism—it urges the road of least resistance along which no-one ever reaches any goal worth reaching—it fobs us off with pre-digested mental food which is of no value as nourishment, and addiction to which weakens and destroys the muscles of our brains. No-one would ask a biologist, an electronics expert, a physicist to be "immediately comprehensible to everybody". We live in a difficult world, and our job is to welcome—and overcome—difficulties, and not to avoid them and seek an easy outlet, which only delivers us into the hands of newspaper tycoons and other purveyors of rubbish, concerned not with literary values but only with profit. Politicians too in capitalist countries do not want people to think—they know they are more easily governed if they just unquestioningly take what is given to them. That is why the Soviet practice of criticism and self-criticism in public is so invaluable—that is also why in this country we have a Law of Libel to prevent the frank and fearless growth of public criticism, and why any attempts at satire on the B.B.C. or I.T.V. so quickly run into trouble. The authorities do not want that sort of thing to develop in this country.

We have had a long history in Scotland of the development of the Labour, Trade Union, and Co-operative Movement. It has consistently fought shy of cultural issues. There is still far more Methodism than Marxism in most Labour Party supporters. Those who may have been accustomed to think of the Fabian Society as a sort of Socialist intellectual *élite* may be surprised to find Sidney Webb, afterwards Lord Passfield, writing "the perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality, but the filling, in the best possible way, of his humble function in the social machine".

Ramsay MacDonald and Mrs. Jean Mann expressed themselves in a very similar way, and I do not expect anything better from Jennie Lee, now the Minister with special responsibility for the arts. She is no better qualified for that post than Edinburgh's Lord Provost, Sir Duncan Weatherstone. As Duncan Macrae said of him and his associates on the Edinburgh Festival Committee: "The Festival is run by people who don't know anything about culture or art. The Festival is not cultural and has no relation to art or culture, national or international."

What is true of Lord Provost Weatherstone is true of almost every public figure who speaks about literature and the arts. They don't know anything about them. They could hardly do better than begin to learn with Honor Arundel's book.

The arts are taken seriously, as Major Hooper insisted long ago, in the Soviet Union. Or as George Steiner has written, reviewing Jürgen Rühle's *Literatur und Revolution:*

> "Communism is a creed penetrated from the very moment of its historical origin by a sense of the values of intellect and art. In Marx and Engels this sense is explicit. They were intellectuals to the core . . . Even under Stalin, the writer and the literary work played a vital role in Communist strategy. Writers were persecuted precisely because literature was recognised as an important and potentially dangerous force. This is a crucial point. Literature was being honoured, in however cruel or perverted a way."

Steiner goes on, with reference to Rühle's book:

> "He has set out to write a history of 'the writer and Communism' throughout the world from 1917 to 1960. It is a massive, wide-reaching enterprise; it spans the course of Russian literature from Blok to *Zhivago*; it deals with the poetry of Pablo Neruda and the fiction of Erskine Caldwell; it passes from a discussion of the politics of Thomas Mann to a critique of Lu Hsun . . . A mere glance at the index and illustrations shows that there is hardly a major writer in our time (Proust, Joyce, and Faulkner are notable exceptions) who has not been touched at some stage in his life and art by Communism . . . Because Rühle refuses to distinguish between Hegelian-Marxist precepts and Communist practice,

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he fails to note the deep influence of Marxist ideas on Western aesthetics and literary theory. Whether explicitly or unconsciously, our whole contemporary view of art is penetrated with a Marxist awareness of social context and historical dynamism. Even the most Alexandrine of 'new critics' owes to the Marxist tradition some realisation of the economic or social *milieu* that lies behind poetic style. Indeed, it may well be in aesthetics, rather than in actual literature, that Marxism has made its most solid contribution. Yet Rühle scarcely mentions the three critics who, together with Lukacs, have brought to the West what is most fruitful in the Marxist view of art: Walter Benjamin, Lucien Goldmann, and Edmund Wilson."

Discussion contributions on:

Rudyard Kipling Re-Estimated

A. L. Morton

THE old Fenian John O'Leary once said to Yeats that there was no cause so bad that good men had not defended it for what seemed to them sufficient reasons. This I think is true, and to few things does it apply more than to Imperialism. About the nature of Imperialism there is no need to write here: as Communists we have been fighting it all our lives and are fully aware of its evils.

Yet we could make no greater mistake than to imagine that all who have defended and upheld it were rogues, hypocrites or careerists. Many British administrators in India, for example, have been truly dedicated men, in love with the country in which they worked and anxious to serve it to the best of their powers. They have genuinely believed that British rule was beneficial and necessary, and that their work was progressive and civilising. Without such men Imperialism would have been weaker and its defence more difficult. But a bad cause does not become good however devotedly it may be served.

Kipling, I think, was above all the voice of these honest and dedicated Imperialists, and it is this which makes him at once so attractive and so dangerous an advocate. Attractive because he served a cause in which he genuinely believed, because he loved India, however misguidedly, because the power and passion with which he expressed his faith cannot but command a certain unwilling respect. Dangerous, just because this power, passion and sincerity enabled him to invest his cause with a false glory that a less honest and less talented advocate could not have given it.

This has misled many of his admirers, including perhaps Jack Dunman. While I can agree with Dunman that Kipling was a great writer who needs a careful re-estimation, I feel that his article is in its way just as unbalanced as the uncritical condemnations which it attempts to replace. In many respects the things which, it is suggested, show that Kipling was not really an Imperialist show the exact opposite. He was so convinced an Imperialist that he was not afraid to expose and condemn its abuses: he believed that his cause was strong enough to bear the light upon its faults.

But the system itself, the fundamental proposition that it was the right and duty of Britain to rule and civilise the "new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child", is never for a moment questioned. His utmost contempt is always reserved for the critics of Imperialism, for intellectuals and radicals like "Pagett M.P." His hero is always the soldier or the dedicated civilian, sweating it out on the hot plains. And, of course, *as an individual* he often was heroic, sacrificing health and even life for quite inadequate rewards. What Kipling could never see was that he was also dupe and victim, sacrificing himself to safeguard Imperialist super-profits. It is precisely the qualifications which Dunman finds it necessary to apply to the "Imperialist label" which made him such an effective apologist.

It is just because Kipling wrote with such genuine affection of Tommy Atkins, and, for that matter, of Gunga Din, that his influence was so strong and so dangerous, not only in general but even within the working-class movement. This is nowhere more clearly shown than in the case of Robert Blatchford in his extremely revealing little book of Kiplingesque *Tales for the Marines*. On one level they are full of rebellious feeling, the voice of the common soldier rebelling against an inhuman discipline. The enemy is its agents, sergeants, red-caps and the like. But with all this there is never a suggestion that Blatchford understood that his soldiers were at once the

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victims and the instruments of Imperialism, that the colonial wars they were fighting were dirty wars. It is easy when reading these tales to see how it was possible for Blatchford, in spite of his sympathy for the underdog, to become the rabid jingo, filling columns of Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* during the first World War.

For such reasons it seems quite beside the point to quote isolated passages from Kipling's writings as proof that he was not after all so reactionary as all that. I remain unconvinced that "his attitude to many things was profoundly progressive, despite occasional expressions of conventional reactionary attitudes". On the contrary, it was his fundamental attitude which was reactionary despite occasional expressions of what might at first sight look like progressive ideas. In particular I find it hard to believe that he became less reactionary in later life or that he grew to detest war. No one screamed louder against the Hun during the first World War, just as no one was more opposed to Bolshevism after it. The writings of his last years must be understood in the light of the whole history of his own development. It is true that in these years he was a lonely, embittered man who, for all the wealth and the reputation he had gained, was conscious of failure.

He had the wit to see that the war had turned out badly for British Imperialism, and he saw also that the cause he had served was facing defeat, rotted from within by its unworthy adherents ("twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools") even before it was crumbling before attacks from without. But the awareness of defeat did not make him progressive: there is not the faintest sign that he welcomed the new forces. On the contrary, it deepened his regret for the past and his fears for the future. To grow unhappy is not really to become more progressive.

Write Kipling Off?

Must we then write Kipling off entirely? I don't think so. Just as the support of good men does not make a bad cause good, so adherence to a bad cause does not make a good man or a good writer bad. Here it may help to consider the point Dunman made about his popularity in the Soviet Union. I believe the same is to some extent true of India today. The point is not that this is something we ought to accept uncritically, but that it gives a pointer to a historical approach. For a Soviet reader Kipling's imperialism is largely irrelevant. It is not dangerous because it can have no attraction for him: its interest is mainly historical, something that can be noted before passing on to what is really important. The same, with obvious differences, may be said for an Indian reader. For us the position is different; British Imperialism is far from dead, especially within the Labour movement. Yet since Kipling's time much has changed: the war continues but is being fought on different fronts and with different weapons. So even here much of his ideology is so dated as to have lost a part of its danger. We can begin to take a more objective view and this will become increasingly possible.

Already we can begin to separate his reactionary ideology from what is more positive, to appreciate his power and technical skill, to see beneath the ideologist a passionate, thwarted man with profound human sympathies, though these sympathies have very sharp and very odd limits. No doubt, and this is where I can agree with Dunman, Kipling was a man of conflicts and contradictions, within whom love and hate fought an unending battle which went near to destroying him.

Above all, we may feel pity for the tragedy of the writer who might have been, whose great gifts were so wasted and distorted. It has never been observed, I believe, how easily he might have come under a positive influence that could have transformed his life—that of Morris. Yet his favourite aunt, Lady Burne-Jones, "Georgie", was Morris' closest friend, and, if she did not share his socialism, was a not less ardent anti-imperialist. At the end of the Boer War, when her neighbours were decorating their houses, she hung from hers a black banner with the inscription: "We have killed and also taken possession."

Further, the headmaster of Kipling's school, Westward Ho, was Morris' old friend Crom Price, and a passage which stands out incongruously in the generally deplorable *Stalky and Co.* tells us how Price gave him the run of his library in which he read Rosetti and *The Earthly Paradise*, and how Price

> "Would read here a verse and here another of these poets; opening up avenues. And . . . speaking of great men living, and journals, long dead, founded in their riotous youth; of years when all the planets were little, new-lit stars trying to find their places in the uncaring void, and he, the Head, knew them as young men knew one another."

Kipling as a boy must often have met Morris at the Burne-Jones' house, where his holidays were spent, and cannot have been indifferent to his influence. Yet this was not in the end strong enough to overcome the counter-pull of his own Anglo-Indian family and other forces. What he probably did learn from Morris was his respect for craftsmanship, for getting things right. It is tragic that he failed to learn the greater lesson of the uses to which craftsmanship may be put.

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Jessie Kocmanova

LIKE many of my contemporaries, I was brought up on *The Jungle Book*, read to us by my father round the fire at night, and Akela and Bagheera were lurking behind every armchair. But by the time I was rebelling against authority in every form at the age of fourteen or so, nothing disgusted me more than the use made of Kipling by the Scout and Guide Movement. In my romantic adolescence, the sense of "in-ness", in something inexplicably marvellous to be "in" on, that was conveyed by *Stalky and Co.*, won me back for a while, but by the time we were all reading Grahame Greene and Koestler in the late Thirties, Kipling had faded away into being a rather absurd, altogether unreliable writer with no application to the contemporary world. What was my surprise at one of the first plenary meetings of my local Party branch in Czechoslovakia after the war to hear, as part of a "cultural programme", something being recited which in a few minutes I recognised as a translation of *If*—to my horrified protests that this contained the very essence of imperialistic ideology, friends and comrades replied: "But it's such a fine poem." Again and again here I have come across people quoting this poem—and certainly, there's no question of the translation having distorted the poem. I'm sure it is this vivid sense of man sticking up to nature which is what appeals to Soviet readers. And of course, that is what Kipling is writing about most of the time. Obviously, to the English reader, with his intimate knowledge of the context of Kipling's art, and of the uses to which Baden-Powell and Co. had turned it, it is other facets of Kipling's brilliant reflection of life which are most visible. It is surely this limited view which lies behind what I can only call the inverted jingoism of William Ash (*Marxism Today*, October 1965).

To condemn the reassessment of Kipling as "imperialistic apologetics" not only reveals a question-begging personification of "imperialism" but a lack of knowledge of literary and critical processes. It is a fact that critical reassessments come about in cycles, and rightly so. It is not a matter of being in the fashion, but because every succeeding generation is normally in a better position to make a true assessment of an older writer.

With writers such as George Meredith or Henry James, who set out deliberately to use devious means of laying bare a truth, we enjoy the process of hunting down the implications and the ambiguities. With a writer such as Kipling, who set out to be limpidly and crystal clear (or did he?), the ambiguities seem to have begun to loom up only over the years. Perhaps this may be because Kipling is using Pre-Raphaelite methods on very un-Pre-Raphaelite material.

Kipling's relation to the Pre-Raphaelites has, surprisingly, not yet been mentioned in the discussion. While one of his aunts was Stanley Baldwin's mother, her sister was the wife of Edward Burne-Jones, the beloved "Georgie" of William Morris's most intimate letters, one of the few women in whom Morris found comprehension and spiritual support throughout the long years when he faced the intellectual and moral struggle of working out his philosophy and practice of Marxist Communist art. So that Kipling's family background was not only one of "Tory notabilities" (D. Lesslie, *Marxism Today*, November, 1965). It was very intimately related to Pre-Raphaelitism and the artistic trends which the latter led to, a movement which in its essential approach to art breathed life into stuffy Victorianism, reaching back to Blake and forward to Leger. Nor was the family influence the only connection: Cormell Price, headmaster of Kipling's school, was one of Morris's intimate group at Oxford, and Kipling in *Stalky and Co.* has borne witness to the breathless wonder with which "Beetle" listened to his headmaster's talk of those marvellous Oxford days. The careful and vivid, defiantly realistic detail, the eager and devoted tracing of individual forms, which in Kipling's case was often transferred to the reproduction of individuality in speech, the calling in of ballad, fairy tale and myth to point a moral and provide a framework, the use of prose to illustrate poetry, and poetry to illustrate prose, the conscientious specificity of background—all these are Pre-Raphaelite traits, and as such certainly part of a very valuable heritage.

Kipling, like all true artists, was always seeking in his work for knowledge, of himself and of life, and in his later stories he attained a very bitter knowledge indeed. It is surely our duty to ourselves as well as to the writer to endeavour to analyse this knowledge and his communication of it with all the tools at our command.

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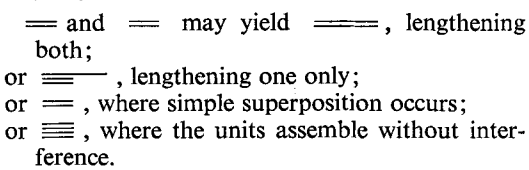
The Laws of Dialectics

D. N. L.

On Laws

"We cannot make up even fairy tales about a world where the laws of logic did not apply, or where two plus two was not equal to four."

But not to be imaginable is not necessarily not to be true; surely this is the lesson of the revolution in physics? The proposition that two plus two equals four is true only subject to severely prescribed conditions. By habit we take these conditions for granted in daily speech, but as the diagrams will show, they are necessary and relevant:



= and = may yield ====, lengthening both;
or ≡——, lengthening one only;
or ═, where simple superposition occurs;
or ≡, where the units assemble without interference.

Thus the rules of arithmetic are valid only when they are applied to entities which may be assembled in such a way that the entities are not themselves altered; and such an assembly is not the only kind of assembly. Thus these laws had to be discovered by the same process of abstraction as led to Boyle's law.

Examination of the laws of logic will show—if due attention is paid to the nature of *thinking*—that they, too, had to be discovered, and that their validity, also, is restricted to such and such situations. For logical necessity can mean no more than that a given process of inference leads to correct conclusions. But how is this to be found out, except in use? The difficulty here lies in the fact that—as far as I can see—people ignore the fact that thinking is just talking to yourself. And what you can say—even when it is consistent with itself—is no guarantee that things are as what you say them to be. Descartes might *say*, "I doubt the existence of this table at which I write;" but he did not, in fact, doubt its existence—if he had, he would have got a table on which he could write.

Propositions are not logically true; only inferences have logical truth, or validity.

If I say:

> As I leave A, going along this road, my distance from A grows; so, if I keep on going, my distance will keep on growing.

This is a valid inference—as long as my distance from A is less than some thousands of miles, in these latitudes. It is not merely valid. I shall make some silly, and maybe disastrous blunders, if I ignore its conclusion. But, once beyond that limit, it ceases to be a valid inference. This kind of shift in validity of inference occurs in scientific research, and can be very disturbing to minds unfamiliar with the dialectics of nature.

The laws of dialectics were discovered as science was more and more developed; and it was discovered that such laws as Boyle's and Galileo's (about falling bodies) were—it seemed—both true and false. But the fault lay not in the world—it cannot contradict itself—but in our formulations of the world's behaviour. Thus dialectical laws are a further development of science, in that they are concerned not simply with natural laws, but with the relation between the behaviour of the world and the human process of learning about that behaviour.

On Consciousness and Artificial Intelligence

"Assuming that a working definition of consciousness. . . ."

This is not the way to approach this problem, since the only consciousness of which I am directly aware is my own; and who is to say what it is, but myself? We must, rather, look at situations in which we use the term, conscious, in talking sensibly about what *they* do, and in dealing with them in practice. The only fellow-creatures to which we attribute awareness in our practical dealings with them are the creatures whose behaviour is determined by their seeing or hearing or smelling what is at some distance from them. Sentimentalists may worry about the feelings of roses (why not, of onions?); let them. Hunters, the shepherd with his dog working sheep on the hill, the animal trainer, and men in all their daily intercourse with other men—it is in what these do that we see what they understand by consciousness. They are obliged (and this is the clue to reality) to take into account, in understanding the behaviour of the other creature, the fact that it responds to things afar off. But it is not necessary to attribute to most of our fellow-creatures any other awareness, such as our own self-consciousness. Our kind of extra depth of awareness lies in thinking, and this is impossible without language. It is internalised speech—and nothing more. And it is only because we live in human society that we have language, and but for language there would be no human society; there is here an interplay very difficult to set out in what seems logical formulae, *tant pis pour la logique*. To talk of computers becoming conscious is thus to talk nonsense. For the operators

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do not need to take account of anything in the behaviour of the computer that they have not built into it—however odd its behaviour may, at times, appear. Your readers should go to Oparin or Haldane on the origin of life to learn of the peculiar features of living things, from the first beginnings of life.

When bio-chemists produce free-ranging creatures, which are viable, we shall probably be obliged to think of these as conscious. This is not making a mystery of consciousness. It is trying to make sure that we keep in view the enormous distance between the simplest living being and the most complex computer. To overlook that distance is to fall into the trap of mechanical materialism. Dialecticians, as Lenin remarked, may sometimes go wrong and say that twice two is five; but they do not say that twice two is a tallow candle.

John Lewis

I AM not convinced that the laws of Dialectics can be formulated with the finality and precision that Maurice Cornforth seems to think possible, or that the conventional 'Table of the Laws' really expresses the heart of dialectical thinking. If all our formulations, whether of natural laws or laws of scientific method, are *empirical* they cannot be final, but must be of the nature of working hypotheses.

No necessity or finality or completeness is possible in any empirical thinking: necessity only pertains to such statements the opposite of which are self-contradictory. Such are mathematical statements or equations and hypothetical syllogisms. Empirical generalisations are either statistical summaries, calculable probabilities, or hypotheses that are capable of refutation and therefore partial and imperfect. No hypothesis is necessarily true.

No matter how many examples of a dialectical law can be found, for example the 'unity of opposites', we are not entitled to treat it as completely established. Statistics tell you nothing about the future unless you make the assumption of the uniformity of nature or the permanence of statistical form.

I'm not at all sure that every unity consists of opposites in the sense of conflicting tendencies. Many opposites are correlatives and nicely balance each other in a condition of relative stability. For example freedom and necessity, heredity and environment, the individual and society.

I am not at all sure that the Laws as we formulate them are exhaustive or even the most important. Where do we find them stated by Marx himself? His references to dialectics were about something entirely different about which we seldom or never say anything: How man makes himself and remakes himself, the reciprocal interaction of basic economic structure and superstructure, the influence of ideas on history, freedom as the knowledge of necessity. Marx explicitly set forth his conception of dialectics in his essay on The Hegelian Dialectic, which no one ever reads.

I don't think we should talk about *Laws* at all. All effective thinking no matter by whom *is* dialectical, and it is so in very many ways, not merely in the form of quantity changing into quality, etc. For instance the most important qualitative changes are due not to mere increase in quantity, but, with exactly the same quantity, the appearance of a change of *pattern*, as in the different pattern of the same atoms in different molecular compounds.

I think it would be better to speak of *maxims*. 'In your investigations, look out for contradictions.' 'Remember that many things (not all) are in processes of development and change.' 'Look out for what is coming into existence and what is dying away.' 'Remember that change of structure pattern will give you new and unpredictable qualities.'

Harry Fomison

IT is astonishing to find Maurice Cornforth (*Marxism Today*, p. 331, col. 2) stating that "moral laws . . . appear to have an objective character" and "we can always argue about whether a particular formulation of moral law is or is not a true formulation of what people ought to do."

"Moral" is derived from "mores"—customs—and customs vary widely from time to time, place to place, society to society.

Look how rapidly our ideas on sexual behaviour are changing at the present time. Compare the "respectable" Englishman's change of attitude to sex when he lands at Boulogne or Bombay!

Cornforth may mean that in so far as custom may have a widely pervading and long-lasting hold on a society, it may appear to many people to constitute an objective moral law; but this scarcely qualifies it to be classed along with the laws of nature, logic and mathematics.

Or does he believe there are such things as absolute moral laws?

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Labour, What Next?

Maurice Costin

THE most important sections of Jack Rosenberg's contribution were those which dealt with the weaknesses of the Left, and Communists and the Labour Left. While referring to our annoyance with the Left's practice of discussing "all kinds of issues and political actions without reference to the Communist Party", Jack Rosenberg poses the question "Is there not a reverse problem of Communists not seeing the existence of the Left, or of understanding its potentialities?" Are we likely to increase our understanding of the art of building unity by having discussions under such inappropriate titles as "Labour, What Next?"

What we should be discussing at the present time is Labour Left, Progressives, and Communists: What Next.

Labour Left, Progressives and Communists

The Labour Left cannot be discussed usefully in isolation from the role of the Communist Party. Of course it is necessary to make an estimation of the Left's positive and negative features. But it is only useful if we use the results to develop the Left in the right direction.

Labour's Left is to a great extent a reflection of the unity between the Left and Communists at any particular stage. It does not exist and certainly cannot develop in isolation from the Communist Party. The more Communists accept this fact and that failure to fulfil our role increases the numbers and strength of the Right, the quicker the Left will develop.

Any thought of developing the Left which does not include consideration of the role of progressives who are not in the Labour Party will fall short of reality. Many mass movements require the participation of religious people and Liberals, for example. A broad popular alliance needs them even more. Labour's Left will often take united action much more readily with Communists when a mass movement includes the progressives as well, e.g. councils for peace in Vietnam.

Unity of the Left, Progressives and Communists

The key question therefore is how can we best develop our relations with our natural allies, the Left, and Progressives? At this stage Communists must realise that individuals are very important in Britain. Too much is decided by too few in British movements. Maybe deplorable, but a fact none the less. However, it is hardly surprising since the capitalist class do everything possible to create the impression that workers are of no account. The problem of involving greater numbers of people in the making and carrying out of decisions is still with the C.P.S.U. after 48 years of socialism. While working to change this situation in Britain, it is of paramount importance to understand the tremendous power of leadership in the hands of individual Lefts and Progressives.

Therefore, the task of winning the masses and the individual activists must be seen as separate parts of the same problem. While carrying out the independent work of the Party among the people, Communists have a specific task of developing and organising the Lefts and Progressives into united leaderships of broad movements. Let us be clear that mass movements do not automatically flow from mass work. With the present size of the Party it is possible never even to meet some of the key activists in a locality or factory without a deliberate conscious effort.

The starting point for Left, Progressive and Communist unity depends greatly on the building of friendly contacts between individuals. Unity can flow from friendship, not hostility. However, the Cold War propaganda has lost its impact. The main problem now is for Communists to end the non-formal bans which grew at the height of the Cold War. Indeed the situation has changed to a point where it is right to describe many of these bans as self-imposed.

Informal unity of Progressives is the prerequisite of formal relations. Communications to the organisations of the Lefts and Progressives are properly received when the people considering our declarations of intent know us as individuals. Personal contact with these activists is relatively easy to establish in comparison with reaching the masses.

Communists, Elections and Membership

It comes to this, what Labour does next depends upon what the Communist Party can achieve in the way of building friendship, unity, and from this, mass movement. At the present time a great step forward can be achieved. The Cold War is diminishing. The people are feeling the effects of the maturing problems of British capitalism. This has been reflected in the mass movements which have grown in recent years, on the Common Market, peace,

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education, wages and so on. We have reached a stage where almost every worker agrees in most cases unconsciously with one or more aspects of Communist Party policy. Most people belong to one or more of the progressive or potentially progressive organisations, and take their lead from them. Communists must enable the local leaders of these organisations to identify themselves with the aspect of Party policy which corresponds to the demands of their organisations.

Naturally not all of these people will join the Communist Party. Many of them regard themselves as Labour, Liberal or non-Party. But that is no barrier to them fighting sincerely, on the basis of Communist policy, that aspect of capitalism which impedes the progress of their organisations.

We have achieved much already in this direction but nowhere near enough. In every locality the leaders of numerous people's organisations must be won to see that Communist policy corresponds to the needs of their members. They will not often refer to the Communist Party for reasons referred to already. What is important is that this achievement in an area ends the isolation of Communists in their mass independent activity among the people. In the factories and localities comrades are seen as part of the movement for progress, and the Tories are isolated.

This is the only way forward to Communist M.P.s and a substantial increase in the number of Communist councillors. Unity will not be impeded by the Party's electoral role. The fact that the Party contests seats does not deter workers from united actions around real issues that affect their daily lives. It must be admitted that Communist participation in local and parliamentary elections can be misinterpreted where there is insufficient contact between us and the Left. We have to recognise that not only can we explain our electoral role to the Left, but that it is essential that we do so.

Jack Rosenberg quite rightly rejected the possibility that united action inhibits the growth of the Party. In fact a mass Party is an impossibility without unity. It must be said though that it would be a major disaster to neglect the independent role of the Party. Unity and Party building must go hand in hand. This doesn't require that comrades work themselves to death. Rather that it is necessary not to put all our eggs in one basket.

Gordon Robinson

IN what I feel is an unbalanced and much too mechanical approach to the Labour Left, Comrade Rosenberg has written as good an argument as I have read in a long time for the maintenance of the "ginger group" concept of the Communist Party. Although it is not explicitly stated in his contribution it is implied by the very tenor of his argument that we should put our shirt on the Labour Left. The danger is that by doing so not only would we lose our shirts, but our trousers as well!

The drift of his argument must be contested, since if it were adopted, it would not only turn us into an appendage of the Labour Left, but make us believers, like so many of them, that we can get Socialism by merely outnumbering our opponents in the citadels of power. Comrade Rosenberg's attitude comes from the same stable as that "just-round-the-corner" optimism that so many of us have about the Labour Party, and the real lack of comprehension that some of us have of the institutionalised power of the Right in the Labour Movement.

The way in which he underestimates this strength is seen in his belief, stated in the first paragraph, that we must expect the "greatest challenge to emerge from the Labour Left". Obviously pen was put to paper in the glow of Left-wing expectation that preceded the Blackpool Conference when it was confidently thought in many quarters that Wilson's guilty political past would finally catch up with him. Alas! In what the *Financial Times* called the tamest conference in years, this "greatest challenge" failed to "emerge". Even though the Executive was snowed under by 387 hostile resolutions (when haven't there been hostile resolutions?), Conference approved some of the most reactionary domestic and foreign policies ever to appear before it.

Some "challenge"! Some "emergence"!

But shouldn't we be encouraged by the access to the P.L.P. of many new progressive M.P.s? The answer, of course, is that we should, but only in its right perspective. True, the backwash of the Scarborough Conference and the determination of some CLPs to nominate Left-wingers (notably in London and the North-West) finally lapped up against the inner sanctum last October, but this does not represent, even when added to other events, such an important landmark as is claimed for it, and it may be instructive to note that some of these newly-returned M.P.s did so by "mistake", in that like Hobden and Kerr they were put up in constituencies that "usually" go solidly Right.

Even with this new addition of strength to the Parliamentary Left it is much too extravagant to claim, as Rosenberg does, that, "Wilson . . . (cannot) . . . get away with the same type of programme which Attlee carried through. . . ." The fact is that he can,

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and he is, and his policy if anything lies to the right of Gaitskell. True the Left has protested and petitioned over these matters, but these petitions, and the number of signatures they collect, cannot be taken as any "pointer", as Rosenberg calls it, in any real meaning of the word.

Not only has the Left in Parliament not been able to budge Wilson, but he has also been able to behead them by offering many of their more capable and experienced leaders Government jobs which, except in the case of Allaun, have not been vacated as Government policy has unfolded. Greenwood, as Rosenberg notes, is the lamentable case. In December 1964 he promised delegates that he was "defending the ramparts against Reaction". With British Guiana and Aden to his credit delegates must be wondering if they heard correctly. Other examples of this process of emasculation can be seen, such as the drawing in of formerly active Left-Wingers (Swingler etc.) into responsible P.P.S. jobs.

Most readers of this journal could multiply the above many times over, and it is for this reason that this lesson must be learnt well. That is that we should not depend on whether Left-wing M.P.s say some favourable things (good though we all recognise this to be) but that it is the mass movement and the issues that it fights upon that is important. It is for this reason that the Communist Party has called for a mass party to facilitate the raising of the understanding and political cohesion of the people of this country for policies that really matter.

If Comrade Rosenberg wants to see the Labour Left really "emerge", the way is to isolate the Right in the only way possible, by mass actions led by a Communist Party that has shed the inferiority complex that is central to Rosenberg's case.

Elizabethan Popular Songs

Stephen Sedley

KATHARINE THOMSON'S well documented article on Elizabethan Popular Songs and the Musical Tradition seems to me to be built on several assumptions which are either incorrect or are simplified to the point of inaccuracy, and which have limited the usefulness of her thesis.

One of her principal suggestions, as I understand it, is that the mantle of the folk tradition in the 16th century fell—if it fell anywhere—on the Elizabethan composers. The notion is not a new one: the Elizabethans themselves had it, and on the strength of it they produced a great deal of nymph-and-shepherd folderol which had as much to do with folk tradition as *I'll never find another you* or *There but for fortune* in our day. Folkum, as the Americans call it, is always with us.

The real question is whether Elizabethan song derived anything substantial from traditional song. Katharine Thomson's evidence on this is, I feel, thin. The simple "melodic phrase, based on speech" which she traces back and forth is, precisely because of its simplicity, no real test. It's rather reminiscent variants of *Baa baa black sheep*.

Wouldn't one reasonable test of the "popular" nature of Elizabethan song be to see how much of it passed into (or back into) oral tradition? As far as I know, though I'd be glad to be corrected, very little did. There are 17th century broadsides directed to be sung to William Byrd's splendid tune *Sellenger's Round*, which must therefore have passed into oral currency. A street singer lost his ears for singing a parody of *The hunt is up* in the 1530s, and it was still being parodied in the 1680s. But I doubt if such swallows can make a summer.

Broadsides and the Oral Tradition

Apparently with the aim of bolstering her argument on this point, Katharine Thomson points the old ignorant folklorists' finger at the broadside printers and accuses them of killing off the oral tradition. During the 16th century, she says, when capitalism was in its infancy, many of our traditional songs were replaced by broadside ballads, thus becoming a commodity.

Leaving aside this sentence's odd assumptions about the relation of productive processes to creative art, it is time that the myth of what Katharine Thomson calls "the inevitable deterioration caused by this process" was exploded.

It is quite true that the great majority of news-item broadside ballads (the kind of thing Autolycus peddled) were poor stuff. But many broadsides, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries, carried "straight" folksong texts. Some bear the marks of garbling in the course of oral transmission; some have been tarted up by printer's hacks; some are simply misprinted. But the important fact is that dozens of broadside printers like Kendrew of York, Harkness of Preston, Birmingham printers like Bloomer, Henry Such (who was printing in the back room of his greengrocery at the Elephant and Castle well into this century), and most of the prolific batch of printers clustered around Seven Dials in London during the 19th century, as well as many of

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the nameless printers of earlier centuries whose broadsides survive, if you look at their output, clearly did a great deal to keep the oral tradition alive and flourishing. If they saw their broadsides as commodities that hardly affects the issue. (In point of fact we know that a number of them were radicals; some were even amateur folklorists themselves—Fordyce of Newcastle for instance; they certainly can't all be tarred with the Grub Street brush.)

Judging by the output of these presses (a good murder could sell over a million copies by the 1830s), their readership must have been enormous, even as far back as the 16th century. Katharine Thomson refers to "the spread of literacy among artisans and craftsmen". I don't know if there is specific evidence of a growth of literacy among these groups in the 16th century; certainly a spread of formal education bears no necessary relation to a rise in literacy—Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution* demonstrated this cogently. It seems to me that, although we know very little for certain about the literate poor in past centuries, there is a lot of evidence which suggests that the art of reading was passed on and handed down on a substantial scale among the common people, and it is possible that in the towns at least it was quite a widespread accomplishment among people who had never been to school.

The thousands of folksongs in the manuscript collections of Hammond, Sharp, Grieg and others, seem to bear this out. They show that the oral tradition assimilated a great deal of congenial (and sometimes not so congenial) material put out by the broadside presses. This, moreover, included not only the feedback of songs borrowed from oral tradition but also a large number of broadside ballads proper. This half-folk half-literary genre developed a style and a momentum of its own. (It bobs up regularly in Pinto and Rodway's anthology *The Common Muse*.) At its best it produced sombre masterpeices like *William Grismonds Downfall*, about a murder at Lainterdine, Herefordshire, in 1650—red hot news, to be sure, but also first-class art, which passed into oral currency (a well-preserved set of it was collected by Grieg in Aberdeenshire this century). What is more, it became the father of a long series of murder ballads, reshaped as events required, which for two centuries developed by an inextricable mixture of oral variation and broadside dissemination, starting with *The bloody miller* (1684) and progressing through *The butcher's boy*, *The miller of Whittingham Mill*, *The cruel miller* and a dozen others. A proper comparative study of these in all their broadside and oral variants would tell us a great deal about the interaction of singing and printing.

It is manifest anyway that Evelyn Wells' assertion, cited by Katharine Thomson, that "Printing stops the creative process" is romantic nonsense. Katharine Thomson herself to some extent recognises this when she goes on to say "A certain number of broadside ballads passed into oral tradition", though in the context of her article the admission is only a small sop to Cerberus. All the evidence is that the broadsides did at least as much to vivify oral tradition as they did to harm it, and this is true not only of words but of melodies. The rich variety of tunes associated with certain song texts is almost certainly the result of broadside prints being fitted to local melodies where they circulated. *Bushes and briars* is a case in point: compare Vaughan Williams' celebrated version (which, incidentally, he completed from a broadside) with the very different but comparably fine set in the Hammond manuscripts.

An Integrated Culture?

I'm sure many of these untenable notions would not have found a place in Katharine Thomson's article if she had not geared it to the curious idea (for a Marxist) of a unified Elizabethan society with an integrated culture. Doesn't all this belong in the Merrie England junkyard? Elizabeth, the last of a line of Tudor despots, was sitting on a volcano. There were frequent bread riots and other discontents from which the defeat of the Armada provided a godsent diversion. The first stirrings of the civil war were already being felt.

There *is* a correlation with the creative art of the period, but can it be formulated as simply as Katharine Thomson suggests: "The 16th century was an age of transition, full of contradictions and conflicts. These contradictions are reflected in the music . . ."? Unless the article has handled its material in such a way as to show this, such phrases are little more than lip-service to Marxist critical methods. I wonder in fact if Katharine Thomson has not missed the real key conflicts altogether. Although I am not a musicologist, it seems to me that the sometimes very involved scores of the Elizabethan composers, like the verse of Donne and of Shakespeare in his later plays, have a painfully controlled intricacy which sometimes brilliantly pulls together the fragments of a world which, in Donne's words, is

> all in pieces, all coherence gone;
> All just supply, and all relation.

This is one idea thrown from outside the arena, but I do suggest seriously that easy words like "contradiction" and stock characters like that old knockabout the Rising Bourgeoisie must never obscure Marxist scholarship's urgent need of long, hard scrutiny of the material on which we try to shape our view of things.

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